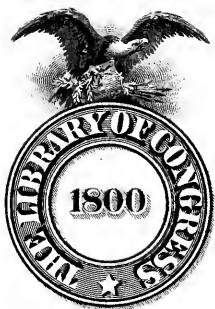


PROGRESSIVE
EXPERIENCE





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T H E

Progressive Experience of the Heart,

U N D E R

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOLY GHOST,

FROM REGENERATION TO MATURITY.

BY

MRS. MARIA STEVENS.
"

WITH A PREFACE BY

BISHOP W. M. R. NICHOLSON.

THE PATH OF THE JUST IS AS THE SHINING LIGHT, THAT SHINETH
MORE AND MORE UNTO THE PERFECT DAY.—PROV. IV, 18.

PHILADELPHIA:
JAMES HAMMOND, 1224 CHESTNUT STREET.

1877.

BV4501
SPR25

GIFT
MISS LETITIA THOMAS
AUG- 3, 1940

JAMES A. MOORE, PRINTER,
1220, 1222 & 1224 Sansom Street, Philadelphia.

W.E.H. 20 Aug 42

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P R E F A C E .

The writer of the following pages was a member of the Church of England, and exercised her most faithful private ministry for Christ during all the years from 1804 to 1840. What Solomon said at the close of his description of the Divine ideal of a good wife, might, with but little exaggeration, have been applied to her in respect of her religious life and character. “Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.” A deeply experienced Christian, and an intelligent and thorough student of the Bible, she was also a most active, painstaking, devoted, and even enthusiastic teacher of the Bible. Her labors, during all those years, as a teacher of numerous classes of both sexes, and her quiet, gentle, yet glowing and most womanly addresses at her various meetings, were signally owned of God, to the praise of the glory of His grace, in all the several kinds of gospel fruit-bearing. She is described as she appeared in her lecture room, at Knaresborough, as “sitting down to play and sing the hymn which she gave out, and when done, sitting in an arm-chair, facing her audience, and in the gentlest and sweetest

voice seeming as if speaking to her friends with energy." Her influence was deep and large. She fascinated her hearers. Nor was it only by the living voice she taught for Christ, but by the pen also; being the author of no less than ten volumes, on as many different subjects.

She was, indeed, experimentally versed in the deep things of God. Her theological views were those known as evangelical; and very appreciatively evangelical she was. "The doctrines of grace" were as honey to her taste. And her ability to expound and defend her views from the Bible standpoint was both marked and effective. But not only so, she *lived* the truths which she professed. Her glorification of Jesus, as well in her experience as in her writings, is as delightful as, perhaps, anything to be found in all Christian biography. And she, being dead, yet speaketh.

The reader is herewith presented with one of her many publications. Its very title is both attractive and suggestive to the enlightened and thoughtful Christian. "*The Progressive Experience of the Heart.*" What a rich domain of truth and experience. "*The Progressive Experience of the Heart, under the Discipline of the Holy Ghost, from Regeneration to Maturity.*" It is the loftiest of themes. And she treats it with distinguished ability. The book is remarkable for its discriminations in the things of God. There are

searching teachings on the subject of sin. And the presentation, in the latter part of it, of the fullness of Jesus as a Saviour, and of the believer's oneness with Him, is at once clear, beautiful, and rapturous. And, withal, there is such an atmosphere of holy obedience, as attempers the joy to a subduing fear of the Lord.

In the midst of so many excellencies, however, there is one defect; perhaps I should call it merely an inadvertence. After tracing the sinner's experience through conviction of sin to the point of conversion, the writer then omits to insist on, or even to mention, that immediately the believer is privileged to rejoice in *the assurance of faith*. It is especially in this regard that Romaine's famous treatise on "The Life, Walk, and Triumph of Faith," is so excellent. Whoever, in a true sense of his condition as a sinner, accepts Christ as his Sacrifice for sins, and his Righteousness, is really saved from all condemnation, and is made the righteousness of God in Him. And this being so, the deliverance should be acknowledged and appropriated. It is due to the reality of Christ's work. Either He is a Saviour or He is not; either He has positively delivered the believer, or He has not; but if He has delivered him, surely He should be acknowledged in the deliverance actually wrought. And such clear, distinct appropriation on the part of the believer is funda-

mental also to any strength of holy obedience. The writer's omission to bring out this point in boldest relief is, indeed, a blemish. She supplies the defect in the latter part of the book, with regard to the believer in his more matured experience; but it is as regards the very outset of the believer that the privilege of the assurance of faith is specially needed to be taught. If, then, the reader will bear in mind this omission, and supply it for himself, there are few books which he will find more useful "for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works." To such as relish Divine things, the reading of this book will be "as a word fitly spoken," and "like apples of gold in baskets* of silver."

W_M. R. NICHOLSON.

Philadelphia, March, 1877.

* Proverbs xxv, 11. *Margin.*

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PROGRESSIVE EXPERIENCE:

OR

THE HEART OF MAN UNDER GRACIOUS DISCIPLINE.

THE HEART'S CORRUPTION.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked : who can know it?”—JEREMIAH xvii, 9.

OBSERVATION and experience will convince us that there is no subject on which man is so generally ignorant as that of the true character and state of the human heart. There is, however, none with which it is of more consequence to be acquainted: the question *how* we may in any degree attain to such knowledge, therefore, becomes highly important. Certain it is, that no power short of the Almighty Spirit can prove an effectual teacher in this pursuit, and to Him we must look for true illumination of mind. Yet as He is pleased in many instances to work through the instrumentality of those persons who are already under divine operation, it affords encouragement to the charity and zeal of faith thus to work; and souls truly imbued with

heavenly affections will not fail to seek the powerful presence of the Spirit in this effort of love. It is a blessed endeavor when they who are constituted by the Lord “the light of the world” labor to shed forth the supernatural rays that emanate from the divine life; and yet more blessed when, by the attendant grace of the Holy Ghost, sinners are thus assisted in discovering their own condition, or saints cheered by stronger discernment of their regenerate state. It may be that the Lord will acknowledge the feeble attempt presented through these pages; His blessing is implored by the writer; may He answer the appeal by speaking in this form to the inquiring solicitude of any precious souls desiring to ascertain the point to which their steps, as spiritual pilgrims, have been conducted !

As a preliminary in the course of subjects proposed for our consideration, it will be necessary, in the first place, to ascertain in what sense the Scriptures make use of the phrase “*The heart of man.*” By comparing several passages which present this expression, we shall discover that the Holy Spirit’s evident design is to describe the source of man’s desires, feelings, passions, sentiments, or actions. Thus it is said in Matt. xii, 34, “Out of the abundance of the *heart*, the mouth speaketh:” so in Prov. iv, 23, that out of the *heart* are the issues of life; and again in Prov. xix, 21, “There are many devices in a man’s

heart." In these and similar passages, the sense is quite clear; man being considered as giving forth, from this internal spring, the demonstration of his character and principles. In its original, the spring was pure and uncorrupt. The gracious Creator beheld His own work with complacent delight, pronouncing the testimony that it was "*very good.*" Consequently, desires, feelings, passions, sentiments, actions, must have been holy, and every issue from the heart in accordance with the nature of holy affections. Alas! this pure original is lost to man; and, according to the word of God, we behold the awful reverse. The creature made by Him *upright*, has sought out many "*inventions:*" he has departed from the simplicity of affiance in God; he ceases to content himself with the only satisfying object, and must have many sources of delight, "*inventions,*" that is, things without reality: imaginary pleasures, and gratifications formed in the conceit of a vitiated heart. Man's heart is, accordingly, from the time of its apostasy, described as giving forth a perpetual issue of evil, as it is written, "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, continually," Gen. vi, 5. "An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil," Luke vi, 45: words spoken, not of one man, or of one generation of men, but of all men universally; for "*out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,*" etc.,

Matthew xv, 19. “*The heart*” being “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Jer. xvii, 9.

This is an awful testimony of the native corruption of man, rendered still more affecting, and alarming to the reflective mind, by the further revelations from God, by which he has *particularized* some of its spiritual maladies, and exposed the hidden evil. To this revelation we are bound to give our decided attention. Infinite mercy has afforded us the sight, and invited us by this means to consider well the misery to which we are reduced, and the absolute necessity of finding an almighty helper, if ever we would attain to that spiritual soundness and final blessedness belonging properly to man as created by and for God.

There is a *hardness* and *insensibility*, belonging to man’s sinful heart, which is the constant subject of reproach and rebuke. He has no fear of God before his eyes, Psalm xxxvi, 1: he has no dread of transgression in his soul; the divine glory, the holy law, the final judgment, are alike contemned and disregarded; and as a creature deliberately and voluntarily given up to impenitency, he refuses to hearken, pulls away the shoulder, stops the ear, and *makes* his heart harder than an adamantine stone, *lest* the words of the Lord should be heard or felt. Such lamentable evils are described thus in the sacred

Scriptures, and not by any *exaggeration* of the evil. Alas! the visible course pursued by sinners affords an incontrovertible evidence of the fact. The stony heart is manifestly thus insensible and obstinate; and we behold the transgressor unalarmed by the terrors of the Almighty, untouched by the divine compassions of the Lord, unconscious of the disgrace and ruin awaiting him, and unmindful of the proclamation of gospel mercy. Thus man coolly determines to prosecute his own way, regardless of revelation, and disdaining reproof.

By another affecting figure God has been pleased to proclaim to man his fearful loss of conformity to the divine nature, and his likeness to the fallen spirits. He is described as *full of darkness*. The ray of glory which illumined his soul when innocent is now withdrawn, and spiritual light is extinguished. He loves to have it so, and is ever engaged in excluding every beam that would obtrude. He loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil; delighting in the service of Satan, he seeks to shroud himself beneath his mantle; and would fain forever shut out the troublesome light, which makes manifest what he would not behold. Thus, whether it shines through the Word, or providence, or Christian profession, or seeks to gain an entrance through the conscience, it is alike hated and resisted. John iii, 19. But this is not all; man

is not only described as *full* of darkness, but *as darkness!* The whole of his existence is, in a spiritual sense, under this dominion: he lives under the power of infatuated counsels and destructive passions, the nature and end of which he does not comprehend; as it is written, "The way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble," Prov. iv, 19: "because that darkness hath filled their hearts," and their nature is entirely assimilated with that of Satan. Romans i, 21; Col. i, 13.

But there is another foul accompaniment of this spiritual ruin. "The heart is *deceitful* above all things;" and whether we look to its development in the things which relate to God, to man, or to himself, we see its willful hypocrisy and deep delusion. It is a traitor, confederate with Satan, and intent upon securing present ease in present pleasure. Innumerable are its resources whereby to lull or to persuade the soul into false peace. Sometimes by arguments which seek to *justify* evil; sometimes by vain pretenses which would bribe the conscience to admit of temporary compliance with sin; and sometimes by a daring attempt to rest upon divine mercy, notwithstanding the indulgence of sin. Thus we hear and feel in ourselves, as sinners, reasonings which are subtle, imposing, and plausible, forged out of the heart's corruption, and greedily adopted as an excuse for rebellion. How many are daily

engaged in uttering insincere expressions of good *wishes*, good *intentions*, *future purposes*, which mean nothing more than an excuse from *immediate* compliance with a known duty!—and how many, under the power of this delusion, are ready to exclaim, “‘I shall have peace though I add drunkenness to thirst,’ Deut. xxix, 19: ‘God is merciful,’ and I shall not be cast away.” Here a deceitful heart is treacherously working to the destruction of the soul. The miserable individual hath, as the Scriptures express it, “a deceitful heart;” it turneth him aside, so that he cannot say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?” Isaiah xliv, 20. His professed approaches to God are of the same character. He will probably occasionally enter His courts, or raise his voice in the language of prayer or praise, but his are “*flattering lips*,” his is “*a double heart*,” “*a double mind*;” his are “*bodily exercises*, which profit nothing;” and his bended knee, voluntary tear, and proffered vows, are all but the *appearance* of religion, assumed for the purpose of *covering* the heart’s abomination, but by no means intended to procure deliverance through the covenant provision of salvation. The expressions found in God’s Word strikingly describe the state of such. “They are deceitful upon the weights;” “they are dissemlers with God;” they are “*a deceitful bow*;” they *pretend* to wing an arrow to the true object, but they willfully miss the mark. This

deceitful movement of the heart will frequently produce a very awful degree of hypocrisy in the concerns of the soul, and also in profession before fellow men. Many there are who, although quite indifferent to the result of *God's* scrutiny, are solicitous to escape the censure of man. They desire to obtain a degree of respectability in life, and would have a certain measure of approbation from the religious. Hence, there are in the world, and in the professing church, thousands who are deceived and deceiving: the *heart* of man being altogether thus evil and treacherous.

We cannot be surprised that a region thus corrupt should produce evil correspondent to the strongest terms adopted in the Scriptures. We cease to wonder that man is described as "*desperately wicked*," that is, desperately *lawless*, breaking the yoke which divine precept purposes, and rushing into manifest revolt from God. Nor can we withhold our assent to the propriety with which the apostate is stigmatized as such by the Lord, since it is evident that idols occupy the seat where God should reign, and that these require and receive from man incessant homage; he gives it with alacrity as a willing votary, and his heart is fully set in him to do evil. Ecc. ix, 3.

This is that interior region of man so little known by himself, yet so awfully exposed to the scrutiny of God. This is that evil thing, the *heart*, of which he is so prone to boast as *good*, in which he so confi-

dently trusts as *true*, and which, even when he is forced by passing fears to search, he examines so superficially, so deceitfully, and allows to be healed so falsely. O let us not be of those who confide in such a known traitor, but rather pause, and meditate upon the divine revelation, comparing it with our own experience. Evidences will then arise before our convicted consciences, which will tend to silence the spirit of self-approbation, and we shall, through the humiliation of an enlightened mind, be better prepared patiently to follow the Healing Guide, who, by powerful operations in the soul, leads out the redeemed to liberty.

If we admit the fact that the Lord alone has a sovereign right to the possession of our heart, its *apostasy* and falsehood will be undeniable. From infancy we have preferred every childish vanity before the Lord, giving individual confirmation to the divine Word, which declares that "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child," Prov. xxii, 15. Our maturer years have been attended with more matured expression of this native departure from the Most High. As it is unquestionably true "where our *treasure* is, there will be our heart also," so is it undoubted that *our* treasures have been amidst creatures, earthly pleasures, objects of sense, and that these have had our heart. We, therefore, come under condemnation; as soon as we were born, we went

astray, and have wandered every one into his own way. Matt. vi, 21; Ps. lviii, 3; Isa. liii, 6. That our own heart has proved itself to be hard and insensible is speedily discoverable. Surely we must be sensible that our life has been one of wicked indifference to every consideration which ought to affect an immortal and rational creature. The terrible law of God, with all its destroying denunciations, has been but as an empty, unmeaning sound in our ears; not all the thunders of Sinai have roused us from our lethargy; not all the examples of judgment which the Almighty Judge has brought before our eyes have excited one personal alarm; awaiting scenes have had no terror to us; we have lived at ease amidst gathering storms and a lowering sky. The gentle Gospel, with all its sublimity, and glory, and grace, has been equally disregarded. We have evinced our native obduracy by a practical contempt of the blessed revelation; we have neglected the ordinances where its messages are delivered to sinful men; or, when *in* the ordinances, have retained the insensibility of a cold and obdurate heart. These are unquestionable demonstrations of our participation in the general apostasy of man. Neither can we be permitted to plead that we differ from others, though on some occasions the Word has been attended with convicting power. Many may, by the force of the blow which it inflicts, be made transiently to

tremble; many may, by the melting strains of the Gospel, be touched, by a passing sympathy, with which it addresses itself to human feeling, who nevertheless are not removed from transgression, nor won to Christ. But the Lord has *various* methods by which to draw near to the heart: these He has no doubt in measure used toward us: dispensations of a correcting kind, such as sickness, grief, suffering, have been sent upon us. *Mercies* also, of abundant kinds, have been dispensed. We have been raised from sickness, we have been delivered from grief, we have been restored to peace. Yet, in all these instances, we have received the visitation only to renew our tokens of insensibility and ingratitude; we have not heard a *voice* in these things, we have not inquired whether there were a cause for the chastisement; nor have we, for the mercy, returned to give glory to God! Alas, we have remained impenitent, prayerless, unthankful! It is probable, in the experience of relief from sadness, some tributes of gratitude and affection have been distributed among those whom the Lord raised up to be our helpers; but the *Author* of these mercies has been forgotten or unknown. We have also had occasions wherein we might observe the divine providence as acting toward others. Sinners have been cut off in their crimes, and hurried to God's dreadful tribunal without a moment's space for repentance and faith.

Saints have been called from a course of obedience and devotion, ripe for their inheritance, and manifestly triumphing over death and hell. Yet these events have not had in them interest sufficient to awaken any corresponding affection within us: we have been satisfied with some unmeaning exclamation of wonder or admiration, and have dismissed the consideration as no longer of any moment to us. Are not these conclusive marks of *our* heart's corruption? Let us, after these reflections, compare ourselves with what is further to be gathered from the Scripture testimony in Hosea vii, 11; Prov. xvii, 16; Ecc. viii, 11; Is. lvii, 1.

By the light which possibly may thus obtain admittance into our minds, let us endeavor to understand the *darkness* which has prevailed. What manifest infatuation has attended our past steps, when we walked in a way of our own devising, and chose to trust in and obey the dictates of passion! How awful our blindness when following bewildering guides, and surrendering ourselves to the rule of the world and Satan! surely we now perceive that we rushed upon a thousand deaths, and madly trifled with the accursed thing. Surely we now feel that we treasured up to ourselves also a thousand griefs, and pierced ourselves through with many sorrows; and all “because that darkness had blinded our eyes;” “the way of peace we had not known;” and *our*

"foolish heart was darkened." Prov. xxviii, 26; Eph. iv, 18; Ps. xcv, 10.

Let us perceive and be humbled for the manifest *deceitfulness* of our heart: in innumerable instances it has fulfilled the Scripture witness, having acted the part of a betrayer to our souls; and we can now probably detect its past treachery. The recollection of its delusive reasonings, its subterfuges and hypocrisy, should fill us with prostration of soul before God, and awaken the expression of wonder, and admiration of His long forbearance.

If duly impressed by this evidence of our own corruption, we shall be better prepared for entering into the subjects which lie before us, and for appreciating the several operations of grace through which they who are recovered from this state of degradation are led by the Spirit. In the meantime we should seek for a due sense of the evil we have discovered. It is not enough that we should be convinced of the *disease*, we must also feel the *torment* which consciousness of disease produces upon an awakened conscience, and know likewise that to disease and torment there is added a certain result of eternal woe to all who die in this native condition. It is from the Holy Ghost alone that influences of this description are experienced; our supplication should in consequence be directed to the mercy seat for the descent of this divine witness. We should ask Him

to produce within us the practical result of self-knowledge, beseeching Him to quicken us to the spiritual affections of watchfulness, faith, and hope, and that what we know not He would vouchsafe to reveal. It is a hopeful pledge of further mercies, when we are made sensible that “the heart of the wicked is little worth,” Prov. x, 20, and that our own heart is worthy nothing but condemnation. Under this persuasion, we shall be prepared to “abhor ourselves in dust and ashes,” and to “place no confidence in the flesh.” The imposing appearances, which have hitherto deceived us, must be detected and exposed, so as to produce this self-distrust. We are destitute of all goodness, might, or power; we must *know* this to be our destitution, and should accept the conviction as a pledge of mercy. There are many precious considerations afforded us in the Gospel, which may encourage and support us, whilst venturing thus to explore and expose the inward man. *Without* these, a sinner may be expected to shrink from the overwhelming discovery; but furnished with the blessed testimony that issues from a covenant God, the work may be prosecuted without producing despair. The salvation that is in Jesus provides for the recovery, the softening, the illuminating, the purifying of the heart, and to this blessed remedy we are continually exhorted to direct the eye of faith. A *true* sense of danger,

so far from generating distrust, or a hypocritical attempt to conceal its extent, will produce an ingenuous effort to expose the whole, with a penitential confession, and a fervent appeal to Him before whose scrutinizing presence we do in fact always appear. Let this be the frame of mind we earnestly covet, and let a teachable acceptance of the word of conviction and reproof prevail in our soul, and be presented before God.

THE HEART UNDER CONVICTION.

"And when he is come, he will reprove (*or convince*) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."—JOHN xvi, 8-11.

WE were led by our last investigation of the heart of man to the affecting sight of that debased condition to which the sinner is fallen as an apostate from God, and as exhibiting his wretched alienation in the midst of spiritual insensibility, darkness, and insincerity. We are engaged in an inquiry, however, which will conduct us into further discoveries of the corruption of man's heart. For, although our great object is to examine the methods by which Jehovah receives His creature to holy adherence to Himself, we have much to interest us in the variety of expedients upon which the infatuated sinner enters, in order to evade the divine operation. And we have also to show how far even they who never experience the effectual call which decides their affections on the acceptance of the cross, may be influenced by certain accompaniments which belong to the mediatorial government that is at present dispensed to the

world. On the present occasion we will consider the state of *conviction*.

By conviction we are to understand something much more comprehensive than what is generally intended by this term. Usually men adopt it in religious subjects to express a *sense of sin* and *personal demerit*. But we shall perceive, upon reflection, that this is not sufficiently explicit, neither sufficiently enlarged in its intentions, to answer the end of a suitable interpretation, since it is evident that there may be strong conviction in the mind of a sinner, without any attendant sense of individual ruin.

Conviction is frequently operative in the *judgment*, when it passes no further, and never reaches the *heart*. It is, however, a necessary experience as put in opposition to that state of spiritual darkness which, as we have shown, pervades, blinds, and prejudices lost apostate man: and thus far it is valuable.

It consists of such a measure of light in the understanding as convinces the soul that whatever is revealed in the Scriptures is *truth*. The unillumined mind is infidel in this respect. It is usually entirely indifferent to the sacred Record, not receiving it with any interest, not attaching any importance to its contents, not admitting it as a standard of judgment; as it is written of the sinner, “his ways are always grievous: thy judgments are *far above out of*

his sight,” Ps. x, 5. If the divine testimony is brought near and proposed, it contradicts and blasphemous: it will not believe the report, and despises it, and, as is affirmed of sinners of old, speaks “evil of the right way,” Is. liii, 1; Acts xix, 8, 9. Light poured in upon the judgment will remove this obstacle; and men under this influence, listening to the revelation of God’s law, are *convinced* of its excellency, and of its divine sanction, at the same time that they admit the propriety and equity of this rule of judgment. This was an effect of the Gospel produced among the Ephesians through the preaching of Apollos, and of whom it is said, “he mightily *convinced* the Jews, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ,” Acts xviii, 28. And for this effect the apostle shows that the laborer should be solicitous, “holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers,” Titus i, 9. An advantage is hereby obtained for the further reception of truth, and proposal of the cross; and this is an advantage which frequently accompanies the dispensation of the Gospel to a particular congregation and people favored with the ministration of the pure word; they are satisfied that what their ministers propose to them is according to *truth*, and that they are urged upon points that must be considered important, as corresponding with a revelation which

they no longer *dispute* or *wholly disregard*. This is conviction *in the judgment*.

A further degree of this operation is experienced when there is also an excitement in the *conscience*, producing a conviction that, Scripture being *truth*, there awaits the creature in a future world certain results of his present course, which God will certainly accomplish. Persons of this description are persuaded that the denunciations of the Lord against transgressors are no unmeaning words, and that as God is true, so surely His enemies will perish. They know, as the Scripture expresses it, that the judgment of God is against sinners, and that they which commit such things are worthy of death, Rom. i, 32. They anticipate the execution of the sentence when they contemplate men in the highway of rebellion, and will frequently exclaim against their career, and talk of the overhanging vengeance which threatens the impenitent. They are equally persuaded that the divine promises shall be fulfilled, and that, so far from the life of a saint being chargeable, as they once thought, with folly and wild enthusiasm, it is honorable, and shall be recompensed. They know that “God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,” Heb. xi, 6; and they frequently contemplate the course of the devoted with admiration; they understand somewhat of its high peculiarities, and will say, “These are the happiest people!”

They are also fully convinced there is not the enjoyment in the service of sin which they once madly hoped and expected: they have seen its issue in others, and that God's word is established in their example; "destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known:" Rom. iii, 16, 17. They look on the thousands who are ruined by crime, in character, in body, and in soul: and not only do they contemplate these results in other seekers of forbidden joys, but their own experience has confirmed what they contemplate; they have found "vanity and vexation of spirit," internal misery, loss of peace, and perhaps of character; they have lived to reap the disgraceful consequences of sin, and are covered with a cloud. They are persuaded also, when comparing the *present* state of believers with that of the transgressor, that the saint possesses the *real* good; and the *conscience* is under the full power of *conviction*, so far as this experience extends: according to the apostle's words, we trust also we are made manifest to your consciences, 2 Cor. v, 11.

A still further degree of this conviction passes through the sinner when these influences are attended with certain excitements in the *heart*, and the judgment and conscience forcibly address the affections. This is the case when reflection awakens misgivings and heart-sickening fears; the sound

of holy reasoning upon soberness, temperance, and judgment to come, creating alarms, and causing the soul, Felix-like, to tremble. Acts xxiv, 25. This is frequently the case in all ages. Thus men, under the preaching of the word, will sometimes be pricked in the heart, that is, be *convicted* by strong emotions, which give witness to the force and truth of the condemning testimony. Acts ii. 37. Or, when they see the judgments of God abroad in the earth, or hear of the impending woes that are likely to fall upon the guilty world, they are filled with conscious terror, and dread the nearer approach of vengeance. Or, when their mortal tabernacle sickens, and they feel the undeniable evidence of their own uncertain continuance here, they are depressed, anxious, harassed in the consciousness of unpreparedness for eternity. And when the visitation of death does really come, they meet it in awful dismay: the reluctant soul is torn from its habitation, and leaves it in the midst of an agonizing sense of the curse. It is possible, however, that conviction of heart may exist in a form more apparently hopeful: as when, for instance, the softer sounds of Gospel fullness of mercy and peace bid the affections move to purposes of love: the affecting details of salvation in the blood and merit of Jesus touching the heart, and *recommending* the merciful Author of the blessing. At these times God is seen with *glimmerings* of light upon His

blessed name and nature, and He is confessed to be worthy the devotion of the whole heart. These are influences not unfrequently produced by the force of emphatic speaking, or human eloquence: and whilst the strain is heard, every feeling seems held in a sweet *captivity*. Subjects *already approved* in the judgment and conscience now seem to win upon the consent of the affections, and innumerable resolutions flutter round the heart, and the cross begins to have some appearance of attraction. These are *convictions* in the affections, and answer to what we read of many of old. Thus the man in the Gospel seemed willing to *profess*, saying, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," Luke ix, 57. And Agrippa could exclaim, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian, Acts xxvi, 28.

Thus we perceive how conviction may operate, separately, either upon judgment, or conscience, or feeling, or in the whole: and yet, as will appear evident upon further examination, be frequently distinct from *conversion*. It becomes, however, a very important duty, that we endeavor to satisfy ourselves as to the *origin* of such excitements.

Undoubtedly they proceed from the *Holy Ghost*. Since fallen man's judgment is darkness, his conscience hard and unfeeling, and his affections apostate, and cold, and dead, from such a source there can be no knowledge, no conviction, no passing

excitement toward God. And we should recollect, when investigating these subjects, a very important part of revelation, which respects the kingdom of Christ. We are taught by the Scriptures, that *all* influences, or manifestations from God to man, are lost by the fall; in token of which he was *sent forth* from Eden into his degraded condition as an outcast and alien. We are taught that divine manifestations or influences are only restored in virtue of Christ's undertaking, which places the world under a present mediatorial reign, the covenant of grace having provided this interposition between the alien and immediate ruin, and brought sinners under the general advantage of a dispensation of forbearance. That in consequence of this dispensation, the Holy Ghost inhabits the earth as a *witness*, coming forth to testify of the covenant, and to fulfill His office to man. And thus it is that He is frequently a witness to man in the way we have described, and as it is declared by our Lord, "When I He is come He will *convince the world*;" men in general, men yet in their state of nature. These shall receive the convicting evidence which shall justify and exalt Jehovah, John xvi, 8-11. In all instances, therefore, such as we have here contemplated, we are to consider the conviction as produced by the Holy Ghost.

These convictions, however, are evidently not always of a *saving* character. We have abundant

examples in the Scripture, of persons under these operations, who were destitute of true faith. Thus, for instance, Balaam could exclaim, "I have sinned:" and yet more, could add, "Now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again," Numb. xxii, 34. Saul is heard to confess, "I have sinned," and, under dread of disgrace, could importune Samuel, saying, "Yet honor me now before the people," 1 Sam. xv, 30. Pharaoh was sensible of having committed dangerous provocation, and acknowledged, I have sinned this time, entreat the Lord for me, Exod. ix, 27. Judas was full of anguish at his horrible crime, and in self-condemnation exclaimed, "I have betrayed the innocent blood," Matt. xxvii, 4. And the Jews, on a certain occasion, recorded in John viii, 9, went out from the presence of Jesus one by one, being *convicted* in their consciences. But in all these instances, it is manifest, there was *only* conviction. We are also quite assured that many who are under the sentence of *accomplished wrath* are *convicted*. Devils believe and tremble, and confess, "Thou art the Christ." Men given up to a state of reprobacy *believe*, and carry within them the ripened spirit of apostasy, either in deliberate despair, or daring controversy with their Judge; having the horror of conviction in a fearful looking for of judgment to come, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary. And all who are finally

judged will carry with them this abiding increase of their torment: they shall be *convicted*. For He shall come “to execute judgment upon all, and to *convince* all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him,” Jude 15.

From these considerations, it becomes evident that there are what we may style *common* and special operations of the Holy Ghost, as He is a *Witness*; so that we cannot decide upon the state of a soul merely by conviction. This stage of experience may be entered by sinners who never embrace salvation, and therefore should not satisfy us either for ourselves or others; for although it is requisite as preparatory for the reception of further revelation, it is not in itself a decided evidence of a regenerate state. This is strikingly set forth in Heb. vi, wherein we have a history of very extensive operations known by persons who never were sanctified, and who consequently had not passed from death to life. We may be enlightened, we may taste or make experiment of the heavenly gift, or Gospel, or good word of God, or the powers of the world to come; we may partake of the Holy Ghost as a witness, or as the author of gifts; yet with all this we may yet be as the earth, still bringing forth briars and thorns, and eventually falling away even from our convictions or

profession; seeing that even during the period in which we possessed this dispensation of the Spirit we were *unchanged* in character, nigh unto cursing, and tending to the end of all unregenerate souls: see Heb. vi, 4-8.

This subject should be exceedingly interesting to us as an assistant in searching our own heart. It should excite us to discrimination when judging of the condition in which we stand at this moment before God; and we should be aware of the peril which surrounds us, if we are disposed to speak comfortably to ourselves, merely on the supposition that because we are not quite so ignorant, so easy, or so unfeeling as we once were, our prospect therefore is bright. Thus far indeed it may be *hopeful*; but much more is necessary ere we can pronounce it *safe*.

In the first place, however, we must endeavor to ascertain whether even we have conviction as thus extensively understood. It should be no surprising question, *Do we believe the prophets?* Do we come to the Scripture testimony as *truth*, so that we are practically giving demonstration that our judgment is convinced? Alas! in too many instances, where by the lip confession is made, and the word of God is received in customary acknowledgment of its divine origin, there is an indisputable manifestation of *infidelity* in the heart and mind. Witness the irreverence, the bold speculative curiosity, the unchecked

career of vice, the indulgence of desires and passions forbidden by the word, the cold unconcern in which the terrible or gracious truths of Scripture are heard, yea, sometimes *scarcely* heard! Dispositions so conspicuously attendant upon those who assemble *professedly* to hear the truth, that we are constrained to acknowledge the propriety of the question, Do I really possess a *convinced* mind on these important points? Am I *quite* sure that I am hastening to eternal misery or eternal joy? that before me there are two wide extremes; that in a few years at most, and probably this very night, I may be called to an abode from which there is no return; that judgment awaits me according to God's undeviating rule; and that without an interest in Christ I am lost for ever? Alas! even with saints there is frequently a want of excitement *such* as these subjects demand, and therefore the inquiry may well be urged upon the generality of worshipers.

Let us also ask whether we are experimentally acquainted with the seizure of conscience and feelings so far as described, having felt the misery of sin, and knowing that God's children alone are happy. No doubt some who read these lines have experienced all these influences from time to time; and it is a privilege if we are able to ascertain the fact: much is it to be preferred to the wretched condition of avowed infidelity, and to the destructive

reign of a fatal stupor: and most miserable are they among us who are still so infatuated and hardened by the power of their native apostasy, as not to have known even this degree of excitement. But let the friendly voice of warning be heard; let us consider how increasingly responsible to God we become by every movement which agitates the conscience or heart, and that, if after these influences we remain in estrangement and indecision, we are increasing our condemnation, because thereby we evince our *preference* for a state of alienation, our greater love of earth, and of carnal delights, than of those which the Gospel proposes; and that, notwithstanding so many powerful motives to the contrary, we deliberately make choice of evil. This is a provocation which usually conducts to a state of reprobacy, for it is an insult to the Holy Ghost, and direct rebellion under the most aggravating circumstances. And it is also the high road to an awful measure of misery; for sooner or later this sin will find out the sinner, and abused opportunities and resisted convictions produce a never-dying worm.

Here we will close our present investigation, leaving it as a solemn charge upon our souls, that we dismiss not the reflections that are suggested, without seeking a suitable improvement. This may be done by combining sacred awe with a tribute of gratitude. We have just reason to be thankful if we are

awakened to self-distrust: we have greater reason for thankfulness if we are delivered from our former state of insensibility: we should contrast our present feelings with what we once were whilst wholly unmoved by truth. It is a mercy that we are not openly infidel, and living in avowed defiance of Jehovah. It is a mercy that we know in some degree what *is* truth, so that we are not tossed to and fro, or carried away by winds of doctrine. It is a mercy that we believe the promise and the threat, knowing that there is substance in them. Pangs of conscience also are *mercies*: they are preferable to a conscience that is seared. Meltings of feelings are *mercies*: better than the obduracy of a rocky heart. In these we should be thankful, and demonstrate our sense of the goodness that has been extended in them, by prosecuting the way of hearing, reading, and self-examination, and by fostering their influences in the use of all appointed means. Above all, praying for the *special* grace of the Holy Ghost, looking to Him for an *effectual* call, and acting as rational and responsible creatures, *correspondently* with the *conviction* that pervades our mind.

THE DIVIDING OF THE HEART.

"Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images."—
HOSEA x, 2.

WE have advanced so far with this course of subjects as to have before us the Scripture account of man's fallen condition as corrupt in heart, and the powerful degree to which, in his yet unconverted state, he is capable of being *convicted*, his judgment and conscience having received light, and these having addressed and excited his natural feelings. Our object must now be to follow this view with an examination into the effects which are frequently produced by these convictions. Faculties thus far awakened will usually proceed to make an appeal to the *will*: they invite the sinner to determine on the side of truth, and to make a corresponding surrender of himself, urging upon him those considerations which he now admits to be of substantial and awful import, and to make him willing to choose the good.

It is undeniable that appeals such as these are visibly silenced and neglected by thousands of our fellow-creatures, and that notwithstanding all the arguments, justly presented and well founded, with which the claimants enforce their counsel, man

remains in his unchanged and natural alienation from God. But this is sometimes attended with very plausible appearances, by which self-deception is practiced. Therefore we should endeavor to penetrate into the secret condition of such persons, and examine the nature of that miserable indecision of soul by which they are ruined, lest any of us be deceived by the same destructive reasonings. For this purpose let us select a few instances wherein we may discover, and present to our close observation, the secret workings of that fatal leaven, which, in these characters, will generally produce what we may call a *divided heart*.

In the first place, it must be observed that persons convicted in judgment, conscience and feeling are usually brought to acknowledge that a personal surrender to the forcible truths they admit is required, and would be wise. This inward acknowledgment, existing in the midst of an unconverted heart, meets with much to debase its quality, and to impede its action. One of the first attempts, therefore, which the sinner makes, on these occasions, is to reason himself into a belief that he can answer the obligation in such a way as shall exempt him from inconvenience; in short, that it is quite possible so to serve God, as not to break his league with the world. Under this notion, his object is to reconcile the service of *two masters*, Christ and Belial.

This design originates in awakened and convinced faculties. The sinner is, as we have shown, convinced of the superiority of the Christian's possessions: he believes what is promised to the saints of deliverance in trial, security in death, a kingdom of glory and everlasting rest. He is not disposed to relinquish the hope of sharing in these distinctions: *he* would be supported, received, and have peace at last, and, Balaam-like, expresses his passing desire, "Let me die the death of the righteous." Being equally persuaded of the misery that awaits the impenitent, he has also on this ground strong excitement: he does not like deliberately to meet the dreadful evils denounced upon sinners, and when he thinks of trial, death, and future scenes, he, like Ahab, would put on sackcloth and walk softly. Therefore he would *seem* to accept the remonstrance, and meet the invitations of truth, and wishes to be accounted among the number of those who enlist themselves in the service of the Most High. In this way he hopes to escape divine judgment, and that God will count him for a friend. He hopes that he shall hereby evade the denunciations and reproofs of ministers, and that his soul shall be left untroubled, and that at least *some* of the Christian privileges may be tasted by him. Thus, in the spirit of the Jews of old, he flatters himself in his own eyes; and even when hearing the denunciations which condemn his

soul, like them, he confidently exclaims, “God forbid.” Luke xx, 16.

There are also other powerful considerations which bring in their arguments on the side of the *world*, and *this* master is in his turn listened to with attention. It is certain that if the sinner break from his yoke, he will immediately become liable to the rage of his old master. Persecution and scorn are the lot of saints. This is a heritage the very thought of which blights all his purposes toward God: he cannot endure to meet the evil which a bold separation from the world might produce. Besides all this, there are private feelings yet more powerful: the affections are closely entwined round earthly objects, creatures possess the heart, and some favorite idol possibly constitutes the very life of enjoyment to the soul. To disentangle the thoughts from these, to rend away the entwined affections, and quit the loved hold upon what has hitherto been so dear; instead of smiles to meet their frowns; instead of tenderness to have to contend with reproof—this is intolerable to the mind, and the whole bosom is convulsed by the thought. In addition to this, there is still a charm of an irresistible kind in the gay circle of worldly pleasures, and many enjoyments which seem to smile and court the sinner, asking him to seize the passing joy. And must he relinquish all these? and turn away from

paths where flowers spread their carpet for the feet, and choose in preference a *thorny* way? this is abhorrent to the flesh!

These feelings lead to a yet more confirmed resolution of endeavoring to unite the two services: and, therefore, along with an appearance of unison with the saints, he would seem to be upon the same friendly terms with the world as heretofore. He will not obtrude his convictions upon the company with whom he associates; he has no objection that it should be thought he likes the company of saints, owns them, and occasionally seeks them. The world may know that he has pleasure in hearing religious discussions; that he is rational enough to have some thought about his soul. But he gives it to be understood, that in so doing, he by no means intends to *separate*, or condemn the world, or the opinion of others. He boasts of liberality, and that, in this disposition, he considers every man has a right to judge for himself. He occasionally accepts the invitations which call him to join the party of pleasure, and tastes the joys of earth, and can very conveniently hide the difference of sentiment that exists, and conceal his own views as expediency may suggest.

But such an infatuated course is not pursued without accompanying inward rebuke: judgment, conscience, and feeling, are not satisfied by such

lying refuges. Wherefore, in order to answer the remonstrances which arise, recourse is had to subtle reasonings. It is pretended that the evils incident to serious Christians are not for their *religion*, but for their *imprudence*; that they are not cautious, not judicious, are too scrupulous, and give unnecessary offence. That the world is not so very evil as it is represented; that, if *let alone*, it would not molest the saint; that, if entered with care, it would not defile; and that in fact, God is not so severe as really to *intend* to condemn so many thousands of his creatures as He must do were the sentiments of some believers quite correct.

Thus miserable man is industrious to serve his own delusions, *argues* himself into false security, and is contented to remain with a *divided* heart.

But it is not always thus. There are some who do not reason upon such principles. The force of conviction presents such a view of truth, that they are quite persuaded the world must be renounced. In consequence, they *profess* religion *decidedly*. They give up all worldly associations, abstain from all mixture, no more frequent the assembly, the race, the scene of dissipation; the gay circle has lost this associate. No concessions are ever heard, the life with steady severity testifies against the world, and boldly advocates the Scripture doctrines. No outward duty is omitted; Sabbaths, sacraments, religious

meetings, all receive their regular attendance and honor; and thus far the character and profession appear determined. Nevertheless, there is not *decision of heart*. There is not a correspondent inward surrender. All this exterior of devotion may subsist in persons whose *interior* is still under captivity to God's enemies. A favorite idol is reserved, and although so great as to eclipse the law, the gospel, and eternity itself, it is called a *little one*. Tempers and passions remain unmortified, and, instead of being abhorred, are palliated under the pretence that they are *constitutional infirmities*, and, although *lamentable*, that they are to be considered *excusable*, especially when counterbalanced by so much zeal and scrupulous attention to other matters. By these a divided heart is not only allowed, but justified; and, like Jehu, they present some particular act or work foremost for observation, trusting that this will secure the character at which they aim. 2 Kings x, 31.

We may mention another example of this ruinous division, too prevalent with many whose external profession would promise better things. They are divided in heart in respect of the refuge they make to themselves. *Doctrinally* they are convinced of the truth, and know that there is no refuge but God, and none like Him. He only is powerful, He only is true. In this respect they can speak the language of saints, and say, "Where is a refuge like our God?"

Yet they practically admit *thousands* to an equal if not to a greater measure of their confidence. Thus, for instance, they look for justification, knowing that this is a state absolutely necessary to salvation; but in seeking it they lose sight of their own doctrinal knowledge; and instead of putting on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus *alone*, they invent for themselves a garment woven of unscriptural materials, half of the Surety's work, and half of their own; *professedly* trusting in the merits of the Lord Christ, but practically adhering to their *own*, they look for *pardon!* This they are persuaded must be extended to them if ever they find acceptance before God. Convicted in their conscience, and convinced in their judgment also of their need and of the covenant provision, they profess to approach the opened Fountain in Jesus' blood; but when drawing near they cast into it certain ingredients of their own providing—their own tears, and penitence, and vows; these they expect will give virtue to the blood, and render it available to them: thus they mix their expectations—part from the sacrifice on the cross, and part from the worthiness of their own humiliation before God.

They look for victory! A convinced judgment has persuaded them that the church of Christ is to be triumphant, and that His people are to conquer their spiritual foes. They call for divine strength,

profess to expect their triumphs through the omnipotence of the Lord, and loudly protest against any other dependence. Nevertheless, they *practically* deny their own profession, expect much from their own native energy, virtue, foresight, skill; look to the several resources which they have devised in the world, trust to their friends and allies, and go down into Egypt for help.

They profess to be waiting for providential direction in their paths, disclaim all pretension to an ability whereby they can decide for themselves, ask counsel both of God and of His people, and wear the semblance of simplicity; whereas already they have arranged their own plans, determined upon the steps they mean to take, and ask direction only in the hope that the result will tend to confirm their determination, and afford them greater liberty in pursuing the dictates of their own hearts.

In deliverances they talk much of the divine faithfulness, appear to be intent upon proclaiming the truth of God, and extol His interposing mercy, at the same time that they are manifestly thinking with great complacency upon the success which has attended their well-concerted measures, and intermix their praises of God with certain observations respecting their own proceedings, clearly demonstrating that their chief sacrifice of praise is proffered to *themselves*.

These are *very common* instances of the perilous condition we are now investigating, and come into the number of cases wherein a *divided* heart is prevalent.

The visible demonstration of this state is very affecting to such as understand spiritual subjects, and know the value of an immortal soul. Alas! the course of such persons is full of the most disgraceful and condemning instability, being governed according to the particular interest which prevails at the time of action, and perpetually fluctuating and variable. Thus we see them exhibiting alternately the spirit of vanity or reflection, of levity or sedateness; sometimes full of spiritual subjects of converse; at others, with equal avidity, discussing the topics of the world. Sometimes we behold them in the sanctuary, praying, hearing, raising the hymn, and apparently filled with sacred excitement. Again we see them in their former haunts of pleasure, sitting in the assembly of sinners, loud in their gaiety, and in some melancholy instances even laughing at the seriousness which a little before pervaded their breast. In experience they are of course equally unstable; sometimes joyous, at others miserable; awhile full of hope, again sunk in despondency, just as the *fit of feeling* prevails.

This is a lamentable and miserable condition of soul. In respect of this world, it is folly and woe,

for such persons never have peace or happiness with either master. The service of each is attended with alloys, and the sense of dissatisfaction. There is no *honor* before either. Even the world will despise such a servant, and, whilst wearing the smile of courtesy in the presence of the sinner, ridicules and speaks evil of him in his absence. This insincerity and inconsistency are apparent, and become topics of conversation, and the worldling despairs him as a hypocrite. Before Christ he appears in a character utterly degraded and contemned. His subterfuges are all read by His omniscient eye, and his false reasonings are all exposed in their very spring. His services are rejected, and he is placed under the sentence of condemnation; for Christ has declared, “He that is not with me, is against me.” Thus the wretched soul, after all its vain devices, and temporary resolutions, and occasional sacrifices, is destitute of salvation; for it is not *converted*, and, except we be converted we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. This indecision could not remain if the *will* had accepted the appeal which convicted faculties presented before it. Whatever may be the flattering appearance which we assume to ourselves, the truth is, that the citadel is as firmly the property of Satan as if we had never experienced any emotion upon the subject of religion. And we are still with affections that are estranged from God, with love of self in unsanctified supremacy

within, and with all our native distaste to Christ and His cross.

The evil of such a state should be understood: it is so in respect of our own most sacred interests, and as it is opposed to the will of God. If we are living under its influence, we should be induced to examine its source and its issue. It proceeds from the vilest condition of apostasy from all that is good, and it will conduct into irremediable ruin when our transitory life is closed. Surely therefore, we should be sensible of our own duty as rational creatures, and under a just sense of our danger be willing to ask for the operations of the Holy Ghost in His saving grace. He it is who brings the sinner into liberty, He it is who has the power to establish the soul in its deliverance from sin. To Him our cry should ascend, that He would vouchsafe to save us from the wavering of an unsettled mind, and from the delusions of a divided heart. Whilst to such as have already received this deciding grace from above, the thought of man's native disinclination to the cross, and the retrospect of past indecision which probably now returns upon the eye, should awaken the proportion of praise which the Lord demands; so likewise should we each be vigilant, ever watching against the native propensity of the heart to start aside, and striving to maintain an unquestionable evidence of an entire surrender of body, soul, and spirit to the Lord.

THE HEART'S DECISION.

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not."—ROMANS vii, 18.

WE have now to enter into a view of the heart of man which is calculated to awaken more pleasurable feeling than our late investigation has afforded, if only we are privileged by the blessed witness of the Spirit to discover that our own affections are in this view placed before us. We pass from the wretched object of a divided heart, and turn to what in some blessed instances succeeds, fixed principle, or upright determination on the Lord's side. We must however connect the whole, as belonging to different stages of experience in a sinner's state, and remember how we last considered the forcible appeal made by judgment, conscience, and feeling, to the faculty of *the will*; and also the subtlety in which corrupt affections continue to keep this faculty in bondage, putting it upon deceitful devices, to satisfy the infatuated soul with something short of the saving profession of Christ: and now consider the *effectual* address by which the will is made a captive to the voice of truth.

In the first place we must determine what the will

is, endeavoring to understand its true nature and use; for on this just views in religion much depend.

The will is a faculty of the soul of man belonging to his original constitution as God's creature, and bestowed upon him in order to empower him to choose or reject, and so to act in all things as a free agent. This necessarily belongs to a just idea of a rational being. Man is not as the brutes, without intelligence, or as a stone or clod of the earth, without power of action, but can deliberate, judge, determine for himself. Neither can we have just views of the divine requirement but as we take into consideration this faculty of man, for God does not call for an irrational, forced, or reluctant obedience, but for rational, voluntary, and cheerful compliance with His voice.

We must consequently always consider man's will to be *free*, that is, that it does not act from any violence laid upon it so as to drag it into what it disapproves; otherwise it ceases to be *his will*; for a man that is constrained to do any act against his own inclination can never be said to do it *with his will*.

During man's state of innocence, when his *affections* were the Lord's, of course the will was holy, and in perfect agreement with God's mind: it was directed by holy desires, and would determine on the side of good, freely serving a heavenly Father.

Since man's state of apostasy the will is corrupt,

and in allegiance with Satan; it is directed by depraved affections, and determines on the side of *evil*, *freely* serving the powers of darkness and death.

The nature of this faculty is not changed; this is impossible; wherefore, whatever a man freely does, he does with *his will*, whether serving Christ, or corruption. As the Apostle clearly argues, “Know ye not, that to whom ye *yield yourselves* servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” Rom. vi, 16.

When man is the subject of grace and created anew, the *will* is not changed as to its free character. The Lord does not force his people as slaves, but sweetly constrains them by love; so that this faculty is brought under the direction of new affections; and the creature is thus restored to its rightful allegiance, loving what is good and determining in its favor.

According to this explanation of the will, it is to be observed how this faculty is always addressed, whether the sinner be solicited by temptation to sin, or urged by Gospel overtures to obedience. Thus Joshua exhorted the people on the ground of their responsibility as rational creatures having a will, “*Choose you this day whom ye will serve;*” Josh. xxiv, 15. So again the prophet, “If ye be *willing* and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. But if

ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured," Isaiah i, 19, 20. And our Lord represents Himself as standing at the door, that if any man be found willing to *open* the door he may enter in. Rev. iii, 20. And when testifying of the Gospel of salvation to sinners, causing it to be proclaimed from age to age. "Whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii, 17.

This mode of address corresponds with the character of man as an intelligent being; and it reminds us of this fact, that whatever may be the degree of excitement prevailing upon the other faculties of his soul, nothing is really obtained in favor of the faith until this *determining power* is gained; for it is the stronghold and main seat of government, whether of Satan or of Christ. And by consulting the Scriptures we shall be further convinced, that as it respects the sinner's rejection of the Gospel, or his continuance in sin, the defect lies in this faculty. Thus it is declared by our Lord, "Ye *will* not come to me, that ye might have life." A truth which, no doubt, He intended to convey in respect of *spiritual* interests, when He so remarkably addressed the impotent man, saying, "Wilt thou be made whole?" John v, 6. There could be no doubt of his readiness to receive the bodily cure, but Jesus designed something more than this; and probably the man afterward understood the force of this inquiry. In a

similar strain the Holy Spirit addresses Israel, “ *Wilt thou not be made clean?*” Jer. xiii, 27. “ *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me?*” Jer. iii, 4.

Addresses of this description, however, whilst they suit the condition of man as a responsible creature, serve to demonstrate the extent of that creature’s fall, in every instance being accompanied by results which develop man’s obstinate preference of evil and his determined league with hell. And herein we have a display of divine wisdom which demands our attention. Vain man is intent upon justifying himself even in the course of rebellion which he pursues. And although he will in some instances admit that his paths are destruction to himself, he will pretend that a kind of necessity is laid upon him to remain in his course of ruin. He argues that *he* is willing to be a better creature, but that he has no power: he takes up the doctrine of grace as an *excuse* for his transgression, and replies to the remonstrances which meet him in the way, “ O, I am not an *elect* one, and therefore it is unnecessary for me to trouble myself, by vain endeavors, to be better in my state.”

And how does he know that he is not an elect one? Has he pried into God’s secret counsels? has he read the book of life, and seen what names are written there? How does he know that his own does not stand deeply engraven upon Jesus’ breast?

True and glorious as are the doctrines by which Jehovah has secured the glory of Christ in a people that shall be the reward of the travail of His soul, yet He has not divulged the secret of *who* are among these, save as they are continually brought out from a state of death, and united to the living Head by faith. His *overtures* are in *general terms*, leaving man with the weight of his own condemnation on his own head, and proving beyond controversy that the sinner's pretence of willingness is insincere, for he has everything to encourage him to make an appeal, if indeed he were willing; and unquestionably he would make the appeal, were he willing to experience the blessedness of serving the Lord. Addresses made to man's will are therefore excellent methods whereby to detect man's apostasy, and his deliberate preference of his native estrangement from the Lord. On this ground Jehovah shows that He will judge and righteously condemn the sinner. "When I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not." Isaiah lxv, 12; Prov. i, 23-26.

There is also another advantage obtained by this mode of address. We are not only insincere, and so capable of arguing as we have stated, but we are self-confident and presumptuous, so that in many instances men will reason in a completely different

strain from that of the persons we have described. They will argue that whenever *they please* they can turn to the Lord, for that, the faculty of their will being free, they have an open way to escape from destruction, even although they postpone the care of their souls unto the very last mortal hour. Thus they mistake and pervert the doctrine of the freeness of the will, and conclude that it means the same thing as a power to choose what is good. Alas! this demonstrates ignorance of the bondage in which the *affections* are by nature, which, always adhering to the delights or interests of earth, never impel the will to what is heavenly or spiritually excellent. This evil is discovered by the means of general invitations or addresses made to this faculty, whereby it is found that even in the last hour of life, and amidst all the awful considerations brought home by the judgment, conscience, and feelings of the sinner, there is still an *impotency* in the will respecting things that are holy: so that, ere it can freely determine for God, it must receive a divine impulse through the medium of sanctified affections. In this way Jehovah prepares us for an experimental sense of his own sovereignty, and of the convinced sinner's helplessness and extent of ruin, so that the doctrines of grace shall be received *gratefully*, and with deep humility of heart. And thus the truth is established, that in every instance wherein this faculty of the will is won

for the Lord, it must be owing to an invincible operation from God Himself. As it is expressly affirmed, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," Ps. ex, 3; and, "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." Phil. ii, 13.

It will not offend a soul that has been conducted thus far in the knowledge of his own heart, when he is further informed, that in all instances wherein this operation is effective, it is according to the sovereignty of God's own determination and purpose. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Rom. ix, 15. Herein he aboundeth in wisdom and power for the security of Christ's glory. Were the work of Jesus left dependent upon the natural will of sinners for its success, it must prove uncrowned with any single instance of a soul saved from destruction; for sinners *dead* in their sins, and *loving* their sins, will not come unto the Lord. And even according to the argument of those who ascribe glory to man, and represent him able to turn himself to God, it must appear evident that *Christ's* glory is left at great *hazard*, and with very *uncertain* results to his blessed undertaking. This is not the divine method. Jehovah leaves not His plans and purposes in this undigested, unformed condition, but determines upon effects produced by His divine arrangement, according to an equitable rule, and for the de-

termination also of Christ's mediatorial glory. Isa. liii, 12.

It is in consequence of this purpose, that the Holy Ghost in His covenant office operates in an invincible work of grace in the vessels of mercy, and advancing from those influences which we considered in our late subjects, renders the *conviction* which He has effected a step toward conversion, causing the indecision of a divided heart to be followed by the determination of surrendered affections. This He does by begetting a *restlessness* of soul during the state of indecision, which becomes intolerable. The apprehensions which have filled his mind and judgment are deepened, and become more substantial and abiding: he is filled with alarm for his own personal safety: the yearnings of his excited feelings become more tender and upright: he contemplates the manifestation of the Lord with a degree of earnest desire to become reconciled, and at peace with Him; whilst at the same time deep self-reproach seizes upon his spirit, when he reflects upon his long delay, his insincerity, his base ingratitude to a long-suffering God, and his debased condition whilst preferring the gratifications of sense to those of faith. These are mighty remonstrances from the Holy Ghost, and forcible approaches to *the will!*

By all these operations, He may be described as knocking at the door, in order to obtain an entrance

for Christ, of whom He is now about effectually to testify, and by the persisting of His own covenant grace He will prevail; for when this work is undertaken by Him, He will accomplish that which He pleases. In consequence, the will is in God's due time obtained; the soul having experienced what is requisite in this stage, in order to keep it in a state of humiliation and dependence, the Holy Ghost insinuates His own persuasive power through the faculty, and it surrenders itself. Addresses from judgment, conscience, and feeling, are now uprightly heard and accepted, and a holy resolution follows, not any longer, as having a heart divided, to tamper with the world, but entirely to renounce its destroying interests and pursuits. There is now no more a *will* for its pleasures, its smiles, its gains, its ease. These are become distasteful, and are spiritually disesteemed; so that he exclaims with the apostle, "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!" Gal. vi, 14.

The divine testimony of salvation in Christ is now appreciated, and its sublime truth is attractive and loved. The soul sighs after all it can convey of spiritual riches and joy, and with a *single eye* stands now in fixed gaze and fervent devotion at the cross. The *will* is now intent upon taking Christ for all, and would renounce every other refuge or rest. Gal. vi. 14. Matt. vi, 22.

The justice of God's demand upon the heart is

now fully admitted, and a *will* is felt toward unconditional compliance. Personal consecration of body, soul, and spirit, is considered a *distinction*, universal obedience a *privilege*, the crucifixion of sin a *deliverance*, and the divine revelation which urges to these high services is embraced with a *willing* mind. Rom. xii, 1; viii, 18.

Thus the heart is now proffered as an offering before the Lord. In it there is no anxiety equal to that of being accepted, and of finding the bosom replenished out of Jesus' fullness. And in this attitude the surrendered soul stands before the mercy-seat, waiting the further revelation of peace.

This is the first evidence of a *saving* work in the soul. All preceding experiences belong in common to those who perish, and to those who live. But when the *will* is thus obtained, the Spirit's grace assumes a more decisive form, and we begin to see the work which peculiarly distinguishes the redeemed of the Lord. We have therefore here brought our investigation of the operations which pass in man's heart, to an interesting point, and may pause upon what is thus laid open for our contemplation, since in these subjects our great interest should be to determine our own steps by the Scripture rule, and to seek knowledge respecting the stage to which we may have advanced, in order to apply excitement or consolation as our case requires.

We should, in the first place, labor to obtain thorough conviction of the agreement of this testimony with the evidence which *we* have individually given of its truth, since it is undeniable that *our will* has demonstrated this apostasy and obstinacy: and unless we are experimentally convinced of this, there is no doubt that we are yet in our native darkness and insensibility. A retrospect of the past will convince every man, who has attended to the workings of his own mind, that he has in innumerable instances given evidence of deliberate *unwillingness* to be saved, having resisted the various methods which have been applied to us as rational creatures, and being guilty, under a variety of modes and forms, of putting away from us the plain and direct testimony which, as rational creatures, we ought to have received. And were the Lord to enter into judgment with us at this moment on this ground of our responsibility alone, we should each stand condemned; for *we* have demonstrated that we have had no *will* to the cross. It is necessary to *know* this, and to be humbled by the conviction.

In the next place, we find an interesting inquiry before us when we ask, whether our naturally apostate will has been brought back to its true allegiance? Whether the many convictions, which possibly have agitated our breast, have ended in the experience of holy liberty in the service of Christ? If this be not

our case, let us beware of increasing our condemnation by presumptuously casting the blame on the Lord: rather let us learn to level all our charges against our alienated will, and here bring home every accusation which such deliberate sin should receive. Or, if indeed we have the blessed possession of a faculty sweetly and divinely swayed by the power of the Holy Ghost, in affections which He has sanctified, let us acknowledge the blessing as a *gift*, let us love the Giver; and by the past experience we have had of native aversion to the Lord, wonder and adore, when we discover this supernatural adherence to Him of which our hearts are now conscious.

The Christian will find a very interesting and important engagement connected with his sense of liberty in the obedience of faith. He will feel the necessity of keeping a vigilant eye upon the internal movements of his heart, with an upright desire always to maintain the evidence of a will that is true to God, clear and unclouded before Him. For this end we require perpetual supplies from the Holy Ghost, and should examine all our sacrifices and services, lest on any occasion they degenerate from their high standard, and become mere works of form, or constraint, or necessity. The importance of this disposition is set forth by the apostle, expressive of his own experience in this respect, “If I do

this thing *willingly*, I have a *reward*, but if against my will, a *dispensation* of the Gospel is committed unto me," 1 Cor. ix, 17. He was anxious to demonstrate that he did not serve merely in a customary observance of a particular calling, but in freedom, in liberty, and according to the *willing* disposition in which God delights. Lev. i, 3, 4.

Here also a caution may be suggested, for the direction and comfort of humble souls. We must not confound that stage of experience that has been described here, with a state which belongs to an *advanced* degree of the Spirit's operation. It is very possible that we may have a *will* to perform, before we have a decided evidence of *power*, as the ensuing subject will demonstrate. And we may possibly have many *inward* victories consequent upon this will, even before they become *visible* to us. Our part, therefore, should be, having ascertained that to will is present with us, gratefully to use this measure of experience, depending upon the Lord for increase; and remembering how graciously He has caused it to be written, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not," 2 Cor. viii, 12. This Scripture, which applies to the use of our worldly substance for His glory, will be found of equal application to the things which are spiritual.

THE HEART'S CONFLICTING STATE UNDER A SENSE OF IMPOTENCY.

"For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do."—ROMANS vii, 19.

In our present inquiry it will be our object to ascertain what may be the nature of that experience through which the soul passes when, according to what was last shown, the blessed operation of the Holy Ghost is so far possessed as to enable the heart to exclaim in sincerity, "To will is present with me!" An *advance* of experience is of course to be expected, but it is not always the privilege of the soul to be able rightly to interpret the exercises which accompany such a progress. It may therefore be profitable to the mind, in many respects, that we should investigate this subject.

It is not enough for the upright mind to feel that a blessed change has been produced in the tendency of the will. Great as this privilege is, the restless heart longs for more, and unfeignedly sighs after a power to accomplish what is now decidedly loved. It would embrace the whole commandment with practical energy; and, whilst contemplating the revelation with holy approbation, would exhibit its

excellency in living demonstration. The language of such an one agrees with that of the Psalmist, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes," Psalm cxix, 5.

In consequence of this restless excitement, the endeavor is put forth toward triumphing over those evils which the will has renounced, and attaining to those excellencies which it approves, "I made haste, and *delayed not*, to keep thy commandments." Psalm cxix, 60.

One of the first objects attempted is the *visible* separation from the world which the Gospel prescribes, with the fervent desire that the change may not only be experienced within, but known by all men. In order to this, *new society* is sought after, and the believer longs to be admitted into the number of those who are really the saints of the Lord, and among whom he may be known to have an *abiding* fellowship. He endeavors to demonstrate this, by his courteous overtures to the people of God, by seeking to obtain introduction to their society, and by a regular adherence to all those places where these assemble together; he desires to be considered a brother, and one of their own company. Acts iv, 23; ix, 26. This purpose of heart he seeks to intimate among his nearer connections of family or friends, venturing upon religious observations, seeking to turn conversation upon subjects that may

edify, and if he is in circumstances which give him opportunity or authority, proposing and establishing family worship. He declines the invitations which the world presents, not now, as formerly, under a cloak and with lying subterfuges, but openly testifying that he considers it necessary to renounce the pursuit of carnal pleasures, and preferable to consecrate his time to higher and abiding delights. He wishes it to be understood that he is not the same man he once was, and supplicates God thus to glorify Himself in showing forth this wonderful change. Gal. i, 15, 16, 23, 24.

The inward region of his heart is now also under a close inspection and an upright scrutiny: he resolves upon the severest discipline, and that no rival of his God shall remain within his breast. His honest intention is to mortify all his corrupt affections, and to crucify the flesh. Nor does he shrink from the design when interests that are nearest his heart stand before his recollection; on the contrary, a holy ambition glows in his bosom whilst he contemplates these occasions of trial, and he is ready to press toward the mark and say, I will not offer unto the Lord of that which doth cost me nothing, 2 Sam. xxiv, 24. He has no wish to conceal any secret of his breast, no intention to withhold any possession that he has, nothing is more deprecated by him than the idea of doing the Lord's work

superficially, and thus animated by the spirit of integrity, he sets forth in prosecution of his devoted purpose to bring his all unto the Lord.

In unison with this affection, he resolves upon living, to the utmost of his power, a visible and open pleader for truth, and, as far as ability may be afforded, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. He emulates the zeal of others who have stood forward for their God, and longs to be enrolled in the number of bold and resolute advocates for the cause of Christ. This he resolves upon attempting in simplicity, with impartiality, and with courage, that so his witness may be added to that of the Lord's anointed ones in the service of holiness, and for the salvation of men.

This is the disposition of an upright will that has been brought under holy government; it binds the *whole man* willingly and cheerfully to the obligation of universal obedience, and of open discipleship.

These efforts of integrity serve, however, to produce a very different experience to that which the soul anticipated. Usually the inexperienced believer expects that he has only to *will* a thing, and it is *done*; and he puts forth his purpose with an assurance of immediate gratification to his best desires, whereas, to his surprise and mortification, he finds a development of trial awaiting him, rather than of

victory, and has painfully to learn that he requires an operation of which he was not aware in order to be able to will *and* to *do*. The knowledge he has hitherto attained of the subjects of Revelation, as it respects the evil and strength of indwelling sin, has been more by intellectual than by experimental light. He has indeed seen it to be truly the abominable thing which God righteously abhorreth, he also has learned unfeignedly to abhor it as evil; but he has not discovered its deep malignity, as the obstinate and mysteriously determined foe to the new life that is in him. This he has to learn, *through* his upright abhorrence of it, and *by encountering* it in the resolution of faith; it is then that the *strength* of the foe is felt and owned. Thus, when beginning to open the war and to resist the world, it is found not quite so easy to overcome this formidable adversary as it appeared ere it was encountered; and although the *will* to separate from it is strong and faithful, old habits are found very obstinate, and hard to be overcome; they encumber and entangle those who have been long in the custom of mixing with the world, so that the soul is continually coming short of its own resolutions. Natural affections also raise up powerful obstacles: the fear of giving pain, the dread of seeming to be ungrateful, the horror of wearing an appearance of presumption, or of inducing family discord and inconvenience, all subtilely

reason against the practical decision which is designed; and although these are adversaries which are not obeyed by the upright will, they produce a painful conflict and many difficulties. When putting forth the hand to crucify the flesh and tear down the idols of the heart, and cleanse out the filthy chamber where so many abominations have been harbored, he finds the traitors in arms, and ready to rebel, obstinately disputing the right to the throne; and that efforts to sweep the heart do but stir up evils that were undiscovered until now. “The flesh lusteth against the spirit;” when he would do good, evil is present with him. Instead of improvement he seems to grow worse, and his best resolutions appear to be abortive and vain. When urging upon himself the act of openly warring with Satan as a witness for truth, he is dismayed and awe-struck by finding an unaccountable remissness. Sinners are left unreproved, he hears the evil and strangely passes by the occasion in which it might have been exposed. In the domestic circle, instead of advancing truth in the way he had arranged, his own speech seems paralyzed; or if he speaks, it is done with constraint, with rashness, with a spirit of impatience and irritation, very unlike what he had imagined he should evince. Thus, instead of gratification, he is filled with shame; he returns to his closet full of self-disgust and confusion: he prostrates himself

before God in utter distress of mind, and exclaims in the bitterness of his spirit, “ O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me !”

The distress of this stage of experience is greatly increased by the malignity of Satan and the world. These enemies fail not to take advantage of these circumstances. Satan will suggest that the things which have been received as true cannot in fact be so; that the divine promises are not fulfilled, and not to be relied upon; or possibly that Scriptures have been misinterpreted and misapplied; or that if true to others, they are not so to him; that he can have no part or lot in the matter, since he is thus weak, overcome, and disconsolate; that were he interested in the covenant, no doubt he would, like those Christians whose victorious course he has contemplated, have his trophies of triumph to bring before his Saviour; that possibly he is too vile to be an object of divine favor, or an abode for the Spirit to inhabit; and that in fact he has been very presumptuous in his former hopes and expectations. The world, too, he acknowledges may justly suspect him to be a hypocrite, and perhaps does so at this moment. His family may with propriety charge him with inconsistency. No wonder they have not confided in him; they perceive no difference in his spirit from theirs: why should they respect such an one ? it were better not to appear the disciple he

has professed to be, and to keep his religion, his hopes, and his fears to himself. These are the bitter things which Satan suggests, working through the world, and upon his own natural mind, and prompting him to allow the power of unbelief, and to sink in discouragement, giving up the war. This is a frame of mind most miserable to the sufferer, and most perilous, because its tendency is to generate distance of conduct toward God, a restraint of prayer and a distrust of divine mercy.

Let us, therefore, seek wisdom, that we may rightly interpret these divine methods, for they are *divine*, the result of God's tender and covenant care for the prosperity of the soul that He loves. There are many important parts of Christian experience, which are secured through this conflicting exercise.

In the first place, it is necessary to possess *experimental* self-knowledge, to which end the condition we have contemplated may be considered as a manifesting light. It is true, that the Holy Ghost conducts the mind into the deep caverns and recesses of a sinful heart, disclosing the hidden things of darkness, and causing the dreadful extent of spiritual ruin to be understood. In this operation he carries with him the spiritual law as a detector and touchstone, showing by the spirituality of the requirement the contrariety of nature to the mind of God, and thus *convincing* of sin in a *peculiar* sense of the word.

Of this St. Paul speaks, declaring, “I had not known sin, but by the law;” “when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” And in the interesting disclosure of his painful experience, contained in Rom. vii, we have a full detail of what the soul endures in this state of discipline, and the *end* for which it is appointed. This is necessary in every individual case of a converted soul, for we have otherwise no knowledge of sin but *intellectually*, and no knowledge of self but *superficially*.

It is further necessary, for the purpose of producing in us an entire persuasion that in us there dwelleth, not only “no good thing,” but no *strength* to overcome the *evil* things. Until we have made trial of our ability, we conceive it to be great; but trial brings down our lofty imaginations, and leaves us with the conviction that we are *helpless*; that it is not even in a will governed by renewed affections, and true in its allegiance to God, to accomplish any thing *independently*, but that we depend upon the continued operation of the Holy Ghost for His actions upon the faculties he has Himself given and sanctified, in order to accomplish anything effectually, or to the glory of God.

By this painful experience we are also greatly excited in our warfare: the upright will becomes proportionably resolute by the difficulties it encounters: for although there are awful convulsions which

agitate the bosom, and many temptations to despondency presented to the mind, the Lord, the Spirit, preserves the work in vigor. If foes are formidable, the believer's energy shall rise correspondingly; he finds the necessity of fighting in earnest, not as one who beateth the air; he feels the necessity of girding on his spiritual weapons; of keeping under the body, of watching unto prayer, and of living *habitually* as a soldier of the cross. Thus his affections obtain more substantial existence by the means of a deep apprehension of the exposure of his soul. All this is learned by the conflicting experience described, and therefore sufficiently demonstrates that it is appointed in *love*.

It is of equal interest and importance to understand that there is an *experimental* acquaintance with the doctrines of grace, which is very distinct from the speculative, superficial, hard-hearted, and arrogant disposition with which some persons discuss those parts of revelation; and we should perceive how such an experience is only attainable through this sense of our own misery.

As we learn the nature of original sin, with its accompanying power and results, through this dispensation of conflict, so we learn the glorious plan of salvation from sin in the best way, when it is given through the same medium. Hence it is that we learn the *necessity* for the doctrine of election if ever

we have hope. Others may dispute about it in a variety of human modes, but we, if experimentally sure of our own *death* in trespasses and sins, must be equally sure that if we *live* it is by a sovereign invincible act on God's part, freely proceeding from Himself. We, therefore, *hang* to the doctrine as our dearest ground of comfort, as it is our only ground of hope; and when we listen to the voice of Scripture proclaiming the existence of such a purpose in behalf of wretched souls, our fervent desire is to lay hold upon it, as affording encouragement to us which no other consideration could present. Thus we reason, If salvation be an act so free, so full, extended to the dead, to the vile, then I, who am the chief of sinners, may have hope, for God's eternal purpose may be magnified in me. 1 Pet. i, 2; 1 Cor. vi, 11. It is thus likewise that we obtain a power to propose the doctrine of election to others in a way that corresponds with the Lord's own method. We can do it *confidently*, because it has been displayed in ourselves. We can do it *charitably*, on the same ground. It furnishes us with hopes toward the most wretched, and with motives for perseverance in seeking the wanderer's soul, knowing that *this* way of salvation renders man in *any* state an object that may yet be gathered in by God's invincible power.

The atonement is also most appreciated when its

value is learned through painful mortifying experience. Precious indeed is that blood of Jesus which we believe is able to save such filthy, guilty sinners as we now find ourselves to be! Blessed is the revelation of such a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, wherein the defilements which are daily contracted may all be washed away! And whilst combining the sense of sin with faith in this provision, the cry is emphatically uttered, wash me, and I shall be clean. Psalm li, 7.

Nor less important is the saving estimation of Christ's justifying righteousness which is obtained through the knowledge of our painful shortcomings. Never do we powerfully apprehend this glorious provision until we are made conscious of the imperfections attending our best works: but when in the midst of every upright, fervent pursuit of the divine life, we are convinced that we fail in the measure which God's righteous law demands, then it is that we hail the infinitely perfect merit in which the law is magnified and we are secured.

How otherwise than by the *experience* of our weakness could we be brought habitually to rest upon the strength of the Lord? How vain are all the theoretic views we obtain of human impotency! how ineffectual the mere convictions of sin to produce in us simple affiance in the Holy Ghost! Until we are sensible of our helplessness, through the know-

ledge of our insufficiency, to contend against the smallest sin in our own power, we will not truly accept the covenant proffer of sufficiency in the Holy Ghost. But when we have been made to groan under the weight of corruption, to lament over the wounds and bruises which have attended our independence, and to see how we fall when we attempt to walk alone, we then gratefully accept the arm of our Beloved, gladly receive the privilege of becoming strong in the Holy Ghost, and learn to count this part of the covenant design inestimably precious.

If such be the advantages derived from the painful sense of personal misery, surely we shall admit that this dispensation *is in love*. Let us therefore endeavor to overcome the dejection which assails us on these occasions, and never be discouraged by the strength of our foes. “Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.” If we wait upon the Lord, we shall renew our strength, and in due time we shall mount up as with the wings of an eagle. Isa. xl, 31. Our God will ere long put a new song into our mouths, and teach us to exclaim with other saints, “Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight.” Psalm cxliv, 1. There is no evil so much to be dreaded by the Christian as *distrust of the issue of the conflict*. Such fears are generated by unbelief and

always weaken our hands. They are likewise very frequently consequent upon some lurking temptation to *insincerity* in the warfare. So long as we will rely upon the promise of God, we have every consideration which may stimulate us to cheerfulness and expectation: for although the Lord bear long with His people's cries, He *will* avenge them, and that speedily. Luke xviii, 8. Neither is there any heart too vile for Him whose work is *grace*: nor any sin too strong for Him whose power is infinite. Let us therefore, when distressed by these exercises, run unto the Name of the Lord, for He is a strong tower; and patiently wait until He is pleased to sanctify the discipline to our advance in consolation and the joy of faith. Gal. v, 16; vi, 9; Heb. vii, 25.

THE HEART'S CONTRITION.

" Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities."—
PSALM li, 9.

In our last view of the soul, as brought under the Spirit's gracious operations, we beheld the believer in very interesting and affecting circumstances. Having received the divine unction upon the faculty of his will, and in this grace made uprightly desirous to embrace the service of the cross; and having, as the result of this determination, resolutely entered the scene of conflict, where we saw him encountering his spiritual adversaries in the midst of painful experience: now for the first time made sensible of the strength of his foes, and mortified to discern the weakness of his own powers, the bitter cry of "O wretched man that I am," bursting from his lips, and desolation of heart attending his anxious steps.

We must now inquire into the result of this mortification: which I conceive to be an advanced experience of a state of deep *contrition* and *brokenness* of heart. To some persons who view the subject of Christian exercise superficially, it may possibly appear unnecessary to consider a state of contrition separately from that which we have already traced.

They may be disposed to ask, what more is necessary, in order to constitute a man a real penitent and broken-hearted, than that he should be *convicted*, *willing*, and abased? To the reflective mind, however, it will appear that there is something very essential to a truly penitential frame of soul, which has not yet been before us. We have seen how it is possible for a man to be *convicted* without being *willing*, and *willing* without being *humbled* by discoveries of his own impotency. And it is equally true that he may be humbled and abased in the knowledge of self, without being really prostrated before God, in what the divine standard will acknowledge as *contrition*. Many there are who, under the unfeigned persuasion of their own misery, will utter bitter cries and lamentations, who nevertheless are in no degree *self-emptyed*: and without some degree of this disposition, there is not any genuine brokenness of heart.

This consideration renders it very important that we understand the grace of penitence in a Scriptural light. There is much more belonging to this disposition as a *grace* of the Spirit than is usually admitted. And error in these subjects is productive of the most wretched consequences to thousands of souls.

It is true that by *repentance*, as generally understood, we mean a certain change of mind, or opinion, or judgment, and in some cases an attendant change of conduct. Men, in interests of a temporal nature,

may frequently be troubled by a sense of having committed an error of judgment, or they may be under the influence of different affections respecting the subject against, or in favor of which, they then decided, or they may be suffering present inconvenience from having decided without caution or prudence; the sense of this is distressing, and were it in their power they would undo the past. But this is a distress which is in action only in reference to some *particular* point, not in connection with a *general* view of incompetency to judge or act, and may exist in the midst of encompassing pride and high self-estimation. We cannot call this a penitent *state*, or a *state of contrition*.

Exactly in the same degree a disposition of repentance may be felt upon religious subjects by persons who have never had their hearts broken before God; as was shown in considering the nature of *conviction*. A very instructive example of this description is left upon record in the Scriptures. The history of Esau will furnish us with this in a form which demands our particular attention. He was a carnal man, that is, one who was under the dominion of his own corrupt and sensual inclinations. His judgment was in accordance with the corruption of his affections; and when he reasoned upon the value of the birthright, which was annexed to him as the first-born of Isaac, he utterly condemned it.

He supposed it to consist only of spiritual and distant distinctions, which he had no heart to appreciate; as we discover in his own words, “What profit shall this birthright do to me?” And when a suitable temptation presented itself, he readily sold it for a mess of pottage. Yet *afterward* he regretted this act, because he perceived that the birthright embraced certain temporal dignities and possessions, which he had appetites to esteem; and when these were decidedly made over to Jacob by the blessing of his father, he lifted up his voice and wept. His cries, however, availed not: “he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” The blessing was irreversibly pronounced by Isaac, I have blessed him, *yea*, and he *shall* be blessed. Gen. xxvii, 33. It was a change of this mind, or repentance on the part of Isaac, which Esau so earnestly desired, but which found no place in the mind of the patriarch. Heb. xii, 17. This is an example which exactly answers to the end we are here to keep in view, namely, that mere selfish regret for particular errors comes not up to the true nature of genuine repentance: and that unless we possess dispositions which answer to the standard and rule by which the Lord will judge, our cries and supplications will not avail; Jehovah will never alter His own prescribed mode and holy requirement.

Let us, therefore, seek, in the first place, to under-

stand the peculiarities which mark the genuine contrition of a broken heart. For this end, look to the source whence it proceeds. It is to be considered as the provision in the everlasting covenant, originating with the eternal purpose to exalt the Son of God, as He is appointed to be the heir of a peculiar heritage from among the sons of men ordained to form His mediatorial crown, and be exhibited as loyal subjects of His spiritual kingdom. It is necessary that security should be given for the accomplishment of this object in the willing hearts of people that shall turn to Him and live. Therefore *repentance* forms a chief consideration in the divine arrangement, and is represented in the Scriptures not only as necessary, but as a *gift* which God will bestow. Thus the Apostle, when urging his son Timothy to discharge his duty as an evangelist, warning, rebuking, and inviting sinners, exhorts him to do so in faith, if peradventure God may be pleased to give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. 2 Tim. ii, 25. And so the prophetic voice speaks of the purpose respecting Israel, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." Zech. xii, 10. And in the parallel passage, Rev. i, 7, not only Israel as a nation is thus distinguished, but the kindreds of the earth, also,

shall in this way wail because of Him. It follows, from admitting the freeness of the gift as a *covenant* provision, that it flows to man through Jesus as the Christ, or anointed one; for covenant visitations are all imparted through this blessed medium: the infinitely meritorious atonement and righteousness of the Lord Jesus procuring for man those manifestations of divine love which must otherwise have been eternally lost. Had not this propitiation been offered, the spirit of contrition could never have pervaded the hard heart of a sinner, neither would Jehovah have listened to the cries and wailing from the wretched. Thus Jesus testified to His sorrowing disciple, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come." John xvi, 7, 8. To this sacred source, therefore, the eye of faith must be directed, teaching us to receive the unspeakable blessings of a softened heart as a free mercy from above, as coming to us in the blood and sweet savor of a crucified and risen Lord; and as the token of that triumph which He as a Prince and Saviour has obtained, and in which He is exalted to the right hand above, "for to give *repentance*." Acts v, 31; Ps. lxviii, 18. The virtue of this great offering has availed in all ages, and sinners have been subdued by the force of divine love from the first generation of men. But it has been the divine will to reserve a glorious period wherein *Jesus of Nazareth* should receive the indisputable

testimony from above: and consequently, when promises were fulfilled, and types and shadows were finished by the manifestation of the substance in Him, the Spirit descended in richest plenitude and power, and the *gift* of *repentance* crowned the witness to our ascended Lord.

This repentance is peculiar in its character, as it is the special operation of a covenant God to a people in whom the eternal Son shall be glorified, and attends that grace by which the Spirit deprives the sinner of hope in himself, that He may invest him with a hope in Christ, which maketh not ashamed. For this purpose having, as shown in the last subject, revealed the nature of sin, and stripped off the disposition of self-importance with which man is disposed to encounter it, He proceeds to establish the deep-seated feeling of *self-loathing*. This is an effect following the cry of conscious wretchedness through the power of advancing spiritual existence. It is not the *natural* result of mortification. Alas! even in God's own children there is frequently a lamentable absence of real humiliation, notwithstanding they are ready to confess their own wretchedness. In many instances this confession is attended with a spirit of sullenness or resentment, the soul being ready to take offence, as if the Lord were dealing unjustly and hardly with it, seeing that the desire for victory has been so honest and true. In others there

is a spirit of *selfish* regret when the disappointment of high expectation is endured: they *intended* great things, they *meant* to soar high, to leave all earthly things behind, to bring great glory to the Lord, and to achieve mighty acts; but, alas! the intention is thwarted, and the *regret* is not really the pure sorrow which acts only in reference to the *Lord's* name; it is the grief of not having obtained so much *distinction* as was desired, and which, in *such* a cause, the soul concluded it might rightfully expect. Neither is it unfrequent that a corrupt mixture of despondency and relaxation of zeal is felt, and mortification, so far from producing increase of sanctity, leads to desperation or neglect. These are great evils, and cannot be allowed in the vessels of mercy. They also demonstrate that the Holy Ghost must put forth further acts of His grace toward the soul ere the graces of humility and contrition are secured.

The manner in which this further step is promoted is very important and interesting: nor can it be better understood than by contemplating the believer in those exercises which such an operation will produce. We behold him under this grace ruminating upon the experience which he has passed through, and reasoning upon the results that ought to follow. Alas, he exclaims, I am indeed a hell-deserving sinner! conceived in iniquity, stained by actual offence, enslaved by habits of my own inducing; I

have made efforts to escape my sins, which have returned upon my own head in confusion; I strive to break my bonds; alas! they are riveted and defy my puny efforts; helpless, ruined, undone, I am shut up under a sense of condemnation! And can I complain! Can I accuse my Maker? Can I plead my cause, wherefore it should be better with me? Ah, no! my own transgressions havé taken hold upon me. *I* have been with those who have “drawn iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope,” Isa. v, 18. Here observe how he justifies the Lord. Silenced and abased before the Judge, he puts his mouth in the dust, and answers Him nothing. And, although baffled, confounded, and distressed, he is ready unfeignedly to exclaim with the prophet, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause.” Micah vii. 9.

Behold him before men. Here also his former efforts for victory were true and upright, and his anguish at disappointment is equally sincere: but he is now enabled to detect the lurking vanity and self-seeking which mingled with his profession and hopes. For *this* he is ready to admit that he has been justly mortified: he sits in silent meditation upon his past experience, busily explores the hidden recesses of his heart, seeks out the leaven that he has reason to believe lay concealed within his apparent

zeal and fervency; and discovering the accursed thing, he abhors and loathes himself on its account. Thus he writes bitter things against himself. Alas, vain-glorious soul, thy aim seemed high, but thy motives were debased. Thy zeal seemed pure, but thy object was not so clearly so. Thy own consistency, thy own character, thy own name were the secret springs of action; and thou wert seeking smiles from the professing world, and tributes from men ! Take then thy just desert ! Thus, self-convicted and self-loathed, the spirit becomes reduced, the heart is broken, holy silence rests upon the lip, and there is now an end to altercation, to self-justifying, to fretful discontent. All seems to be less of punishment than has been merited, and more of mercy than there was right to expect. And under accusations from men, or distrust from the Church, the soul is little inclined to take up its own cause, yea, rather turns self-accuser before God, and is humble and silent before men.
Ps. xxxviii, 18.

Observe him in the unconquerable nature of his holy purposes: perceiving *where* he failed, and *why*, he now humbly determines to *use* his experience, and to prosecute his way in more dependence; he adventures forth again to the conflict, but he carefully resists the temptation to self-confidence; his humble resolve is to undertake nothing without a first appeal to the mercy-seat, and to cultivate ejacu-

latory prayer as an habitual attendant upon his way. Thus, undiscouraged and undismayed, he girds on his weapons with adhering faith in the ever-blessed Saviour; and whilst he has learned to renounce himself in a spirit of unfeigned contrition, he lays hold upon the sufficiency which is revealed to him in his Lord.

These are evidently peculiar influences belonging to spiritual operations in the heavenly life, and cannot be properly ascribed to any other power but that of the Holy Ghost in the discharge of His covenant guardianship of an elect soul. It is the prostration of self in the dust. It is the exaltation of the righteousness of Jehovah in His sovereign power. It is the spirit of penitence mixed with faith, and the condition of one who is brought to bewail his own nothingness; but to be *content* to be nothing, that Christ may be all. However afflictive some parts of this experience may be, it is not equally so with that described in our last subject. The agonizing storm, that beat so loudly and tempestuously in the moments of surprise and mortification, is now subsiding, and when there is less of *self-estimation*, there is more of genuine peace. It is not to be said that in this frame of soul we contemplate extensive rest or repose, but there is a great preparation for it; and *comparatively*, there is a possession of peace not known in the preceding steps.

We must not dismiss this part of our investigation of the believer's progress without once more reverting to what has been stated respecting the *source* from whence contrition flows. It has been asserted that this disposition is a covenant provision and a gift from above; and it is necessary that whilst we strenuously insist upon this truth, we should carefully guard against a mistake into which some persons have fallen, respecting the attendant responsibility of man. We are not to infer, that because the grace of contrition is a free gift of the covenant, *man* is to be considered divested of his responsibility: he is a rational creature, and as such he is amenable to his Creator, and answerable for the use of those faculties which have been bestowed upon him. The secret counsels of God respecting His people being hid from us, we have a duty incumbent upon us all when the proclamation of warning, invitation, or promise is brought within our hearing, to consider it an address to *ourselves*; for since these are couched in terms of *general* application, and at the same time specify certain cases, etc., to which they are applicable (which cases answer to our own visible condition), we are evidently guilty of deliberate contempt of the proclamation if we refuse to hear, and on this account shall be finally judged.

This is evident from the manner in which the commission is given to men who are appointed to

proclaim the Gospel salvation. These are commanded to discharge a certain duty: they are sent upon a *message*, but not entrusted with the secret of the Lord, so as to know by whom that message will be received. The voice is to be elevated, and the tidings made known to men. There is indeed a lamentable mistake existing among some who occupy this station, who, looking upon the covenant in its relation to the elect, *overlook the method* which God has prescribed for proclaiming salvation; and, as if they were entrusted with the secret, they deal out the testimony to such as *they* esteem to be the elect, or limit their ministration to the *church*, passing by the rest of the world as comparatively little worth attention.

This, to say the least of it, is an error of judgment; for the Scriptures decidedly instruct us upon this point in a way which ought not to be misunderstood. Men are put into the ministry for the purpose of gathering in, or feeding the remnant. It is true the office of *feeding the flock*, and of dispensing bread to such as are already called in, may be considered as most precious, and a delightful occupation: but the duty of seeking up the scattered ones is equally important and interesting. There are, as it is said, “*Virgins without number*,” Cant. vi, 8; that is, souls that are yet unespoused to Christ by an effectual call of the Holy Ghost. These are to be bidden to

the marriage, and compelled to come in. Now, it is not by a bare proclamation of privileges that this is usually effected ; for sinners must be addressed correspondently with their condition and circumstances, so as to be made to recognize their *own character* as addressed with, "Thou art the man." Therefore the Scriptures are replenished with overtures and addresses of this description. Some, in our day have, however, in defiance of the Bible testimony, affirmed that there is no such method adopted in the Scriptures. What, then, is to be understood of these express passages? "And hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did *beseech you* by us, we *pray* you in Christ's stead, *be ye reconciled to God.*" 2 Cor. v, 19, 20. "We then, as workers together with Him, *beseech you* also, that ye receive not the grace of God (that is, this gracious dispensation) in vain." 2 Cor. vi, 1. "I Paul, myself *beseech you,*" 2 Cor. x, 1. "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God," etc. Rom. xii, 1. "The Spirit and the bride say, *Come,*" Rev. xxii, 17. What is the signification of those entreaties, remonstrances, tender expostulations, etc., with which the *Bible* ambassadors filled their mouths in obedience to the divine voice speaking by them? Thus, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die," Ezek. xxxiii, 11. "Repent and turn yourselves," Ezek. xiv, 6. "Repent ye, for

the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Matt. iii, 2. A method adopted by our Lord Himself, Matt. iv, 17, and enjoined by Him to His commissioned witnesses, Luke xxiv, 47. Rev. ii, 5; iii, 3, 19. That the ambassadors themselves thus understood their office is manifest. Then Peter exhorted the multitude, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," Acts ii, 38. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," Acts iii, 19. "But now (God) commandeth *all men everywhere* to repent," Acts xvii, 30. "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," Acts xx, 21. And even in the instance of the wretched Simon, the sense of responsibility was urged home, and he was exhorted both to *repent* and to *pray*, Acts viii, 22. These considerations should be laid up as a shield against erroneous opinions and false statements, especially as the opinion of those who limit their addresses is presented under the plausible notion of *exalting the covenant*, whereas it is a limitation of the ministry to *one branch* of the service, and an interference with the mode appointed by the Lord. Congregations are composed of two parts—*the church*, or persons already savingly influenced, who must receive the food suitable to their advance and consolation; and

those who are yet in a state of ignorance or indecision, who must be warned, encouraged, and pressed upon the grounds whereby they may appear most likely to be arrested. This is the Scriptural method of discharging the duties of an ambassador. And this gives most glory to God, leaving it for the Holy Spirit to work invisibly and invincibly as He pleases, whilst he, as an ambassador, goes forth on his way, working with persevering charity and hope.

Our subject upon *the will*, will manifest that we do not by this reasoning ascribe anything to man, of merit, power, or right upon this subject; but as he is always addressed, and to be judged, as an intelligent creature, it becomes needful to show him that, as such, he is bound to seek, to knock, to ask. Matt. vii, 7. And that, not doing so, he will be condemned for his unbelief and disobedience. Prov. i, 23–29.

Let us on this occasion put the inquiry to our own hearts, whether we are discharging this responsibility, whether as rational creatures we are making trial of the overtures of mercy proclaimed in the Gospel, being persuaded that whilst continually unaffected and uninterested, we are manifestly in a perishing state, and are dooming ourselves to perdition? Opportunities are rapidly passing away; let them be seized ere they are past forever. Isa. lv, 6.

But possibly the former part of this subject is

most applicable to us. We have heard and obeyed the call, we have contended with our spiritual adversaries, we have had experience in the battle. O should this indeed be our case, let us increasingly cherish whatever may promote *self-emptiness*, taking up all our mortifying experiences as serviceable for the reduction of pride, vanity, and love of human applause; and striving to demonstrate more decidedly that we have been taught to appreciate the covenant provision of strength in the Lord. This is a state of soul highly estimated by its divine Author; and blessed promises are given for the consolation of all who in this sense possess a broken and a contrite heart. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend forever." Isa. lvii, 15, 16.

THE POURING FORTH OF THE HEART BEFORE THE LORD.

“Arise, cry out in the night; in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street.—LAMENTATIONS ii, 19.

“Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.”—PSALM lxii, 8.

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.”—PHILIPPIANS iv, 6.

WE must here pursue our inquiry into the experience of the pilgrim, as following upon that state of contrition which he learns through the sanctified use of spiritual mortification. We have seen him, under a sense of his own impotency in the warfare, humbled and laid low before the Lord; and we have contemplated him in the midst of internal contrition, bursting from his heart in expressive sighs which proclaim his soul’s distress. But this is not the full result of such exercises; there is yet further demonstration of penitence and faith, which is to be considered as belonging to an advancement in the way. Abased and humbled as he is, and made willing to receive the most painful accusations of personal guilt and desert of punishment, he is not hereby

rendered *reserved* with his God. The same Holy Spirit, who is the author of his contrition, is the author of his confidential affiance, in which disposition he comes to a state which we may describe as the *pouring forth* of the heart before the Lord.

It is highly interesting to observe how much this is a frame of soul generated and maintained in conversion ; and that, notwithstanding the most terrible experience of self-abasement, there is a filial spirit always, in some degree, in operation; so that the believer can exclaim, “ Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” “ I will trust in the covert of thy wings.” “ I will trust, and not be afraid.” See Job xiii, 15 ; Ps. lxi, 4 ; Isa. xii, 2.

The manner in which this disposition is maintained should always be kept in view, more particularly when we are considering the *progressive advance* of the life of faith, for the proportion of the Spirit in the believer will invariably prove to be according to the clearness of his vision of the Lord Jesus in His person and offices. It is the purpose of the Holy Ghost always to present Christ to the eye of faith. The very spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus; and the office of the Spirit is peculiarly to testify of Christ. And although, in all the different stages we have examined in the past subjects, each gracious operation is to be considered as descending upon the soul in virtue of the Lord’s finishing work

and mediatorial reign, it is requisite that there should be a more distinct manifestation of the cross than has hitherto appeared in these stages. If we look back upon the statement, it will appear that the soul has hitherto been chiefly occupied by the painful contemplation of self. In this engagement he has found work enough to engross his thoughts, excepting only as doctrinal truths have occasionally come in, either to convict him more deeply, or to sustain him by passing consolation. In many parts of his way he has been something like Ephraim, led and conducted by the Saviour, but *ignorant* of the hand that was guiding him. Hosea xi, 3. And, as the *blind*, led by a *way* that was not understood or fully appreciated.* But this is not to be admitted as an abiding condition. · Since we, who were once alienated and strangers to God, are brought nigh only by the blood of the Mediator, it is requisite that we should spiritually discern the truth, and be admitted into the further liberty which such discoveries produce. For this end the Holy Spirit proceeds to conduct the soul to those blessed heights of Calvary whereon Jesus crucified may be contemplated, and *sin* *felt* in connection with a sight of its *great antidote* in Christ.

* "And I will bring the blind by a way *that* they knew not ; I will lead them in paths *that* they have not known : I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."—ISAIAH xlvi, 16.

It is at the foot of the cross that we learn the essential truths of revelation effectually and savingly. Our Lord has testified, "No man knoweth who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." St. Luke x, 22. This revelation is given through the exhibition of the great sacrifice: and therefore whatever belongs to powerful discoveries of Jehovah in His covenant character, and sovereign glory, must be sought and received through Jesus crucified. It is hereby that the mind is filled with just apprehensions of the righteousness of the eternal Name. The believer, standing at the foot of the cross, lifts his eyes to that amazing spectacle which is before him on the tree. Until now he had obtained his views of justice through the medium of Sinai's lowering clouds and thunders, and by the condemning law set home upon his alarmed conscience: but now he perceives by the groans of Calvary an extent of this awful attribute hitherto unconceived. The costliness of the offering which justice required fills him with awe; he hears the commission "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord." Zech. xiii, 7. And contemplating the attendant manifestation of the unrelaxing severity of the righteous demand for satisfaction to the law, and atonement for offended holiness, his thoughts are enlarged into affecting conceptions of the evil of sin, and the sanctity of Him

against whom it is committed. Here he beholds *sin condemned* in the flesh, even in Him who is the Holy One, but on whom the weight of imputed guilt was laid; he shudders at the frightful exposure of his *own* desert, whilst he looks upon it as endured by his surety; and he prostrates his soul before the *Just* God. But justice *alone* is not the object which arrests his attention; *love*, in all its inconceivable heights and depths, is here displayed. That the dreadful Judge should have voluntarily provided an expiation for the crimes of the criminal; that since nothing short of the sacrifice of the eternal Son could suffice, that Son should be given; that this gift should be bestowed for transgressors, who were in arms against the law and the Lawgiver; and that *foes* should be the subject of this grace, demonstrates so vast an excellence in the love of God, as overwhelms the soul in wonder, praise, and gratitude. When in addition to this he considers the tenderness of Jesus' breast; how he was no *forced* sacrifice, but the willing atonement, coming forth in His own voluntary purpose of grace, and persisting in that purpose; rising superior to all obstacles, all sufferings, and yielding Himself up in unconquerable love for man: manifestations such as these open a new world upon his admiring mind, and at the same time present a forcible arrest upon his affections, all tending to awaken within him afresh the retrospective acts by which he looks

upon his past transgressions, his alienation, his impenitency, his obduracy, now rising before him in deeper malignity, as committed against such justice—such love—such tenderness !

But here let us observe, it is a *loving* grief that runs through the soul. A sight of God in Christ so revealed persuades of grace and willingness to pardon and to bless; a stream of sacred hope cheers and revives the spirit; and in *this* frame of mind encouragement and motive is given for *pouring forth* the heart.

Let our attention be fixed upon the interesting object which is now to be contemplated in the *believer himself*, in whose bosom there is now awakened glowing expectations and hopes. He now ventures to look forth from his own heart, and *comparatively* to forget himself in the Lord: he sees and feels his sin with inward anguish, but he also beholds the all-sufficient Antidote; round the foot of the cross we hear the lowly voice murmuring its tender distress and heartfelt importunity. Amidst these sacred sounds we listen to the touching expression—"Lord, I am sick;" and with it we hear the connected appeal, "My sickness cure!" No words of Scripture can describe his spiritual disease in stronger terms than *he* is ready to admit. He feels that there is no soundness, no health in him: but he has now a faith in the promise, which animates him to seek its application. The Lord has engaged to strengthen that

which is sick, to heal that which is diseased, and expressly engages, “I will bring it health and cure.”* On this promise he rests with grateful desire; and, beholding the opened medium through which this salvation is extended, he entreats that it may come to him. But *sickness* is not all he has to confess: he perceives that in his disease there is filthiness, defilement, infection; and deeply convicted on this ground, he is heard to plead, “Lord, I am *unclean*; O make me clean.” His faith lays hold upon the fullness of the opened fountain, wherein there is not only blood to expiate, but to relieve and purify also; and he urges his suit, that if the ashes of an heifer under the law availed toward those who were ceremonially unclean, much more the sacrifice of the great substance of those shadows may be pleaded for purity and peace of conscience. Experience such as we have contemplated in the Christian’s course will furnish such an one with further arguments and earnest supplication. We hear him bewailing, “Lord, I am *weak*; Thou knowest my inability to work the work of God; I cannot believe; I cannot contend; I cannot succeed, unless Thou art my help; O strengthen my strengthless soul; and as this is the method by which Thou art magnified, show it in me, the weakest of Thy helpless sheep. Thou knowest it to be needful, since I wrestle with foes that are

* See Jeremiah xxxiii, 6.

mighty, and struggle with fetters that are strong. And hear my further suit: since Thou art rich and I am poor, O make me rich! Thou hast taught me that I am ‘miserable, and poor, and naked’ but Thou hast also declared how Thou didst humble Thyself for the purpose of elevating Thy people to a share in Thy possessions; O give me this heritage, and thus cause my soul to forget its poverty, and to rejoice!”

Such is the language of a soul under these divine operations. It is the *pouring forth* of penitence, the utterance of contrition, the faith which appreciates the atonement, and the love that longs to make it its own.

It is true the manner in which these affections are expressed may differ, according to the measure of faith, or operation of the Holy Ghost. Sometimes they are expressed in the fullness of emphatic words, and out of the abundance of the heart utterance flows freely. At other times they find no suitable clothing save that of groaning and tears, the spirit within making intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. But the *desires* are the same, and the *spirit* speaketh before God, who readeth the heart’s emotion, and listeneth to the expressive sigh. There are two things, however, wherein no difference is discoverable when the soul is thus influenced. There will always be faith in the *sufficiency* of the Antidote, and desire to *appropriate* its virtue. The teachings which come from the anointing are always

such as demonstrate that Christ is an all-prevailing propitiation. And in this degree of experience, it is understood that He has obtained an everlasting priesthood, wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. The nature of the foundation laid in Zion, the prevailing character of the mediatorial reign, the security of such as are interested in the covenant, are truths which faith now apprehends. There is, therefore, no hesitation upon this point; the *solicitude* of the soul is that it may be felt and applied to itself; and this is expressed in appeals like that of the leper of old, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou *canst* make me clean." Matt. viii, 2.

We must not, however, lose sight of the affecting truth, that in every period of Christian experience there remains the life of old principles belonging to the flesh, and that upon these Satan will act, so that the soul has to encounter the combined forces of these adversaries to peace at all times, and never more so than in the particular period now described. By these powers of darkness the efforts of faith are resisted, and fain would they prevail to darken the cross and throw an obscurity upon the doctrines that it proclaims. For this end attempts are made to work upon the mind through human opinions and injudicious statements, so as to produce prejudice against the revelation or misconception of its tend-

ency. If this will not prevail, it is attempted to insinuate, that although the doctrines are in themselves unobjectionable, in their *application* they are questionable, and that in respect of the case of this individual soul, not to be appropriated. In some instances the assault may be of a perfectly different description, the endeavor of the enemy being rather to *decrease* the sense of sin than to aggravate the distress of the mind. Advantage for this assault is sometimes given from the very circumstance of the greatness of preceding convictions. There is such a thing as a soul desperately disposed to *harden* itself in sorrow, as Job expresses it, Job vi, 10, dreading the misery which a sense of guilt produces, and hence fearing to admit the anguish which it demands. Thus human reasonings, exercises, or evasions may be imposed upon the soul in place of a disposition to pour forth the heart before the Lord. But suppose none of these temptations present themselves; we know that every believer is liable to the state of *inconsistency* which frequently *follows* upon seasons of prostration. Too often the tenderness which was felt to soften every feeling of the heart is strangely succeeded by coldness; the awe with which the divine glory was contemplated gives place to surprising indifference. The eye that was singly bent upon the one attractive object is miserably diverted from its simplicity, and the Scripture *rebuke* and *exhortations* become affect-

ingly applicable. Every well-experienced soul will be aware of this truth ; and, if he has been observant of his own heart, will have discovered that even the foot of the cross is not a region where spiritual enemies will not dare to intrude, neither are the moments of the outpouring of the heart free from the attempts of an indwelling and watchful foe. Whilst, therefore, we behold the pilgrim with a sympathetic joy that he has so far reached a blessed, sacred spot, and traversed his way successfully ; whilst we listen to his opened heart, made known by a strain of peculiar sweetness which none but the Holy Ghost can call forth from his bosom, we must unite the recollection of his *native* instability, exposure, and dependence, and understand that he has not this experience without his accompanying perils and need for vigilance.

This subject principally addresses itself to *believers*. It describes an experience which none can properly comprehend but such as are regenerate. Testimonies of this nature may be said to be among the things bound up and sealed among the disciples. Isa. viii, 16. We should, therefore, be exceedingly solicitous to determine whether we are savingly acquainted with any of these peculiarities.

In the first place, ever bearing in mind that the great end of revelation is the exhibition of God's dear Son in the covenant of life, and the great rela-

tion He bears to creation. When individually examining our state, inquiries should be pressed home upon our discoveries on this particular. We should ask if our conflicts, our contrition and profession have been sanctified to bring us to this blessed object, so that we are laid low at the foot of the cross? Whether in this attitude we are in truth relinquishing every hope of salvation save what is found in the great provision of the Sacrifice, there exclaiming in the sincerity of an humbled soul, "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel!" Jer. iii, 23. Whether, whilst thus admitting the truth doctrinally, we are *exercising* hope therein *individually*, receiving this testimony as God hath proclaimed it in its freeness and fullness for the chief of sinners? Meeting the merciful proclamation, that in Christ, as the eternal Rock, the soul may securely anchor, and that He will never cast out one who comes thus unto Him. Heb. vi, 16, 17; viii, 10-12.

We should also endeavor always to obtain our views of sin through the medium of the cross, not in the mere letter of the law, but in this awful exhibition of all that attends its sacred character and divine sanction. Such views are best calculated to cherish real contrition, and to fill us with liberty also: so that, whilst conscious of our own desert, we may also speak unto God in the language of filial trust. This

pouring forth of the heart ought to be *habitually* practiced: we should, therefore, look well to our course, and examine if we are thus engaged each day of our pilgrimage: at the same time seizing upon every occasion wherein the exercise is especially required. Such occasions will arise. Times of sorrow, seasons of conflict, and, alas ! sometimes sad evidences of sin. And under these no refuge can be found except our God. No comfort but that which is derived from our living Head. To whom, therefore, should we go ? None but Jesus can relieve, and to none should we pour forth the heart with so much confidential trust. As this is one of the first acts of genuine faith, so let it be one of the last in every stage of pilgrimage ; reserve or distance with the Lord being dreaded as a grievous evil, and the searchings of His Spirit admitted as our greatest good.

And should we not be able at all times to pour forth the heart with liberty of words, let us beware of undervaluing the heart's sighs and groans. The Lord has no need of words in order to understand what we would have and desire. Therefore, we must not fall into the sin of despondency, as if He would be inattentive to the voice of our sorrowing heart.

Should we be privileged to trace our own likeness in these particulars, let us not refuse the cordial cup. We need the consolations of the Spirit in such a

world as this ; and if we possess a Scripture warrant to receive them, why are we foolish enough to hesitate ? Distressed perhaps we are, and may yet be, but possessions such as have been described do not belong to a state of nature ; we therefore may take comfort.

Should we be destitute of such distinctions, let us be alarmed by the discovery, and desire a sight of Jesus such as saints have had ; and ask the Holy Spirit's guiding grace, for He alone can bring us to the cross. He will not reject the upright cry; let Him hear it ascending from the ground of our heart.

THE SURRENDER OF THE HEART IN DEVOTION TO THE LORD.

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."—2 TIMOTHY i, 12.

WE considered in our last subject the divine operation of grace effectually conducting the believer to the foot of the cross, and there pouring forth spiritual illumination to the increased view of the divine perfections. Justice and love more especially giving forth their glorious beams from the spectacle exhibited on the tree. In this situation the evils of sin, as committed against the Holy One, attended with believing perception of the efficacious Antidote provided in the propitiation, were considered as principal subjects of interest and revelation to the believing soul, encouraging the confidential expression of importunate desires after the blessing, in a full disclosure and pouring forth of the heart. In connection with this experience, there is another blessed influence derived from the sight of the cross, forming a distinct and important branch of experience. It consists of a fervent desire for union with Christ, and for the *sense* of that union shed abroad within the heart, differing from the mere expression or

desire after the *benefits* of redemption, and arising out of strong, genuine, and disinterested love. It has been argued by many, that an affection to Christ cannot exist separately from the union of some benefit or advantage procured to the soul by Him, and that it is impossible to dissever the ideas of love and personal benefit. Unquestionably the sense of Christ's redeeming grace, and a solicitous desire for its application, necessarily belong to a Christian existence, and will necessarily inspire the affection of *gratitude* in the believer's heart. But this is not the whole extent of that feeling which is wrought by the Holy Ghost in the soul. There is undoubtedly such a view given of the *personal excellency* of Christ as serves to attract the affections to the blessed object for what *He is in Himself*, independently of His grace manifested to ourselves individually: and without this we appear to be defective in one of the most essential parts of genuine love, and admiration of the eternal Son. If we examine the nature of this degree of experience, we shall obtain some satisfaction upon this point.

In the first place, it arises out of a spiritual discernment into the extent of Christ's act of love and condescension to man, in which the believer discovers an excellency that absorbs his thoughts, and turns him upon intense wonder and praise. He is now (if we may so speak) at leisure, or willing to look off

from himself in some degree, and to admit the attractive power of the Lord. Hitherto he has been almost engrossed by his own concerns and miseries, but now he can suspend these anxious cares, because he experiences the rising of a vehement and strong impulse toward Christ, before unknown. The *unreservedness* of the Lord's love fills him with wonder : he beholds Him readily *giving Himself*, and without any compromise freely devoting His own most holy person for the salvation of men. A new light now breaks upon him from the Scripture testimony, that thus *He gave Himself*; and he remembers with rapture the several passages which proclaim this gift. Gal. i, 4 ; Titus ii, 14 ; Ephes. v, 2. These affections are increased through the advanced understanding he possesses of the nature of Christ, both as it respects His self-existent glory, and His relative office as Messiah. He is now possessed of high discoveries into the sublime truths which respect the sovereign majesty of the eternal Son, and with sacred impressions of the mediatorial kingdom which is established in Christ. What, then, are the emotions of his soul, when he reads that in Him there is a glory reserved for the people of God, which shall dignify them with a full participation of His honor ? He dwells upon the testimony, "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." He discovers in this passage a covenant purpose, that would

not be admissible were not the testimony from God Himself. The heirship of Christ is vast, and great, and unbounded ; He is Head and Lord of creation by this peculiar right, Heb. i, 2, and shall spread His rule over all. The thought of participation in this rule would be deemed blasphemous had it not been appointed of God. And wonderful indeed does that declaration appear wherein Jesus says, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.” Rev. iii, 21. “To Him will I give power over the nations, and He shall rule them with a rod of iron : as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father. And I will give Him the morning star.” Rev. ii, 26–28. Amazing words of grace ! incomprehensible dignity of the saints ! exalting the saved in their glorious Head, and exalting *that Head* in the affection of His saints, as having so much power, so much grace, and so much condescension. These emotions are kindled into a yet higher flame, when it is remembered that the glory of Messiah is founded in *blood* : that the relative dignity which He possesses, as Mediator, is confirmed on the foundation of His own finished work ; and that on the same foundation the glory of His people is established. These are thoughts which fill the soul with tenderness, united with admiration, and prepare the

way for the development of that feeling which we are now investigating. The firm belief of these truths, set home by immediate views of the dying Lamb, has a wonderfully magnetic power, attracting the heart that has been touched by the Holy Ghost, drawing it irresistibly to the Lord, and filling the mouth with the ready expression of its tribute. The language of the spouse is now comprehensible in the fullest sense, and the Saviour, thus contemplated, is confessed to be both "white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand" and "altogether lovely." Experience now throws its powerful interpretation upon the mystic words. The whiteness of His immaculate innocence is rendered more touchingly lovely by the crimson stains with which His own blood has dyed the offering; and truly does the heart now appreciate the words which describe the saint's devoted estimation of the Lord, exclaiming with the rest of believing souls, "Who is like unto Thee?" Thus we perceive that the excellency of the object has its claim upon our love answered, and that, distinct from the idea of personal advantage, there is a surrender of the heart as captivated by the manifestation of Christ.

In the next place, we must observe that love of this description will generate desires after the possession of the object beloved. Not with the formally conceived idea of having thereby a rich property in

the things procured by Christ ; were this the chief feeling, it would be mercenary and selfish. Love asks for return of love, because its estimate of the object is entire : and in this sense the soul is restless for the power to say, “ who loved *me* and *gave himself for me*.” This desire will not find entire satisfaction, even in the appropriation of the tenderest appellations by which Christ is described. It is very blessed to call Him Lord, shepherd, brother, friend, companion : but this is not the nearness which love asks : the *indwelling* of Christ can alone answer this desire ; the power to say I live, yet not I, but “ *Christ liveth in me*,” and the privilege of feeling that there is an indwelling also of the soul in Christ, we in Him and He in us : so that it should no longer be as a divided existence, but as intimately one. Such affections receive their sanction from the word : they are thereby delivered from the charge of wild enthusiasm, or of vagrant reveries. Christ has invested them with solidity and truth, as the work of the Holy Ghost, and as correspondent with His own eternal purpose. In this very spirit He clothed His prayer for the saints saying, “ That they also may be one in us.” “ I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” John xvii, 22, 23. And thus He declares His own covenant will, “ I will dwell in them, and walk in them.” 2 Cor. vi, 16.

Tender solicitude will now arise within the breast,

and some anxious thoughts be ready to break forth : but may this privilege be mine? and, *how* can it be? The solicitude, as it respects willingness on the part of Christ, is quickly answered by the very manifestation which has attracted the heart. From such a one as is seen on the cross, every degree of mercy and grace may be expected. The freeness of His unreserved love bears a stamp upon it, which presents encouragement to the most miserable. Enlivening reflections now animate the soul. Thus he reasons, “ The gift is free without any consideration of worth or excellence in the world : the grace is extended in cases wherein no pretension of merit does exist : sinners most debased have been objects of this mercy, and no vileness or personal wretchedness shall be an obstacle to a salvation thus constituted. The testimony is, that He came to seek the lost, and to *save sinners*. This faithful saying I do believe; neither shall my miserable extent of ruin form an objection to my hope. I say indeed, “ of whom I am chief,” but in saying this, I do not propose a subject of *despair*. Still it is possible that Jesus may admit even me to union with Himself!” Much encouragement is also derived from the consciousness of having feelings that could not have existed but by grace already received. He is now experimentally sure of the fact, “ No man can come to me except the Father draw him.” John vi, 44. He is, however, come, and

stands in that hallowed spot where with loving eyes he looks on Him who died for man. He remembers the words of Jesus, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." John xii, 32. He feels that his soul has been attracted by some irresistible power, and that the Saviour's words have manifestly had an accomplishment in him. That the Father and the Son have been operating upon him appears therefore unquestionable. And since the Holy Ghost is the divine witness, and effectual author of these covenant purposes, he rises into confidence of the eternal mercy toward himself. Looking back upon his past course, he discovers a strict agreement between God's dispensation to him, and that to Israel, "I drew them with cords of a man;" that is, tenderly, sympathetically, in my *incarnate* purpose as Emmanuel: "With bands of love," that is, with covenant indissoluble union. "I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." A figure borrowed from ancient custom in feeding the cattle, and releasing them from labor, strikingly shadowing forth a release from the yoke and servitude of sin, and a participation of the Gospel provisions: all well known to such as answer to the state of experience we are considering, and forming strong confirmation to faith. As the result of such reflections, he is ready to comfort his spirit, saying, surely herein I discover ground for hope: I

have been drawn tenderly, released mightily, supplied with spiritual appetite, and taught to love the descending manna. May I not believe that because He has loved me with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness He has drawn me? And shall I not rejoice in the persuasion that this threefold cord cannot be broken? O may the eternal God-head thus throw around me His encompassing grace, and my present station, as I stand at the foot of the cross, be the consequence of this enduring grace. Hos. xi, 4; Jer. xxxi, 3; Eccles. iv, 12.

These are consolations that are necessary, and without which the hope of union could not exist. The believer retains his consciousness of impotency to do any good thing, and knows that no power can prevail to unite so vagrant a heart as his to Christ, save only the power of Christ Himself. Too often he has proved that his own affections are fluctuating, and that his heart is a vagabond, loving to wander. He cannot, therefore, trust his own ability; and he is likewise quite aware that were he to bring his heart as an offering to the Lord, and profess his own willingness toward the union, there are too many lamentable accompaniments of evil for him to be secure from the fear of rejection, unless his Lord will undertake to supply all that is needful. Hence he is beginning to learn the value of precious doctrines experimentally, and out of these excitements grows

up into clearer views of the excellency of the Lord's sovereignty and covenant grace. On these he casts himself, as affording the strong and only ground of support. And here he delights to abide, exercising the acts of faith which belong to this degree of love.

One of the first acts is an expression of prayer. Courage is taken to put into words the hidden solicitude of the soul, and none are found more aptly describing what is felt than the simple entreaty of the church, "Draw me, we will run after thee." Cant. i, 4. Let us well observe the extent of this sentiment. It contains in it a sense of helplessness, an expectation of help, and an integrity of design; all answerable to the language of the heart. It is a disposition still more comprehensively expressed by the words of the Psalmist, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Ps. cxviii, 27. A prayer which gathers import if we look further into the Scriptures. St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, affirms, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle," Heb. xiii, 10; and proceeding in his testimony, shows how Christ is an altar, exhorting us to offer thereon our sacrifice of praise to God continually. Now we know that the altars reared by God's direction in the Jewish economy were *typical* of Christ; and remembering our Lord's words, "Whether is greater, the gift or the altar that *sanctifieth* the gift?" Matt. xxviii,

19, we have a blessed exposition of the believer's prayer. He desires to be brought as a living sacrifice to Christ, his sanctifying altar: he earnestly asks to be bound to the horns thereof, to be an adhering subject and visible trophy of Christ's dominion and power, made so by the drawings of God's invincible grace. For this he prays.

In the offering which he brings he is directed by the example of Christ; and from the impulse of love, brings his *unreserved* gift. Nothing short of a whole self is proffered. With this he offers all of which he may be supposed possessed. It is no empty skeleton of sacrifice, but substantially his all, to be disposed of and used as the Lord may please, and if it be requisite, to become a witness for truth even unto death. Rev. xii, 11.

But this is not all. He surrenders himself as an offering laid upon the altar, *waiting* for the witness of acceptance; and standing as it were by his own sacrifice, he thus entreats, "Come, Holy Ghost, descend like fire; fall on my offering, and give the token that it is accepted on high. Come, purify it from its mixtures of evil: come, kindle the vehement flame of love and zeal. Assure me that what is now expressed of longings for union, and of willingness on my part toward the blessed compact, is the effect of Thy own operation, and shall be answered with 'grace for grace.' "

These are the dispositions which belong to this advancement in the Christian course, expressing a restless desire after a possession, without which it is impossible the believer can have peace. It is the effect of strong internal impulse toward Christ, as the absorbing object of affection, and will not be satisfied until answered by a power to say, “I am my beloved’s, *and my beloved is mine.*”

The consideration of what ensues must be postponed: we have here before us sufficient for serious self-examination.

In the first place, however, there is a point of doctrine on which we should do well to receive caution from the subject before us. The doctrine of *union* as subsisting between Christ and his people is professedly believed by all informed Christians. We clearly understand that it never was the design of God to make Christians by merely giving to men a Christian *name*, but that they are made so by an ingrafting into Christ, as the branch of the vine, John xv, 5. We know that this is requisite in order to salvation, and that without it we are dead and profitless before God. But errors have prevailed in the ideas connected with this doctrine, and in the method of stating it, against which we should be guarded, for they involve great relative consequences. It is not unfrequent that men will talk of *eternal justification* and *eternal union*, meaning thereby that a man is

from all eternity in a *state* of justification or *state* of union: thus throwing confusion into the covenant revelation, confounding the eternal purpose of God with the positive act. No doubt the privileges in question are both *everlastingly* designed. God will justify his elect. Rom. viii, 33. And these shall be brought into their privileges through *union* with Christ. But they are not in the *state* described until the Holy Ghost has wrought in them the grace of faith, which is the appointed instrument of appropriation in these benefits. It is said, “Whom he *called*, them he also *justified*.” Rom. viii, 30. And “by whom ye were *called* unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,” 1 Cor. i, 9. And “that Christ may dwell in your hearts *by faith*,” Eph. iii, 17. These are blessings known in *time* in the day of *God’s power*, and consequently upon the Spirit’s application of electing love to the chosen. Previously to this operation, we are in a state of darkness, and in fellowship with Be-lial: there can, therefore, be no union existing between us and Christ, as the apostle shows, 2 Cor. vi, 14. “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,” 1 John i, 7. There is, therefore, much impropriety in using the term *eternal union* in the sense which some persons intend. We are children of wrath, even as others, previously to our regeneration. And although the work of an accepted surety prevails to secure us from the

execution of wrath, we are not during that period in the state of oneness with Christ, or objects wherein his complacent love resides. Of this the souls of God's people are made sensible; and hence arises that solicitude we have described, rendering them so restless to obtain assurance, and evidence of the existence of this privilege.

We may now proceed to examine the present state of our own souls, and in so doing should remember that there is a *meetness* for the sensible assurance of union with Christ, without which it will not be given us. Neither indeed will desire after this privilege be properly possessed until the Holy Ghost, in His preparatory operation, has produced in us *supreme* love of the object with whom we desire the union. We have, therefore, to inquire whether our heart is thus captivated, whether the disposition toward union is sincerely wrought in us by the surrender of our affections, so that we can truly say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed," Psalm lvii, 7. The work of the Holy Ghost will be discoverable by this result. There will be the revelation of Jesus Christ to the soul in such power as will act like the shining forth of a hot sunbeam upon the internal region of the heart, consuming all baser fires, and destroying the corrupt flame which burns upon the altar of a natural heart; so that whilst relative affection to creatures is strong and pure, it

is *subordinate*, and exists not in its native character of rivalry with Christ. The fervent solicitude of the mind is now bent upon the attainment of Christ's love; and human solicitudes sink into comparative nothingness. There lives within the breast this continual sentiment, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee," Psalm lxxiii, 25. "Yea, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus," Phil. iii, 8. These affections are also attended with humility. There is no merit attached to them, no expectations derived from them, but the habitual and abiding consciousness of unworthiness; so that the spirit waits for demonstrations of the Lord's readiness to enter into the compact, with tenderness and self-abasement, and a sense of the condescension which must be in action if this grace be given. In such a frame of mind the believer will be willing humbly to give the heart just as it is, that the Lord may make it meet to be His own; and with confidence that, if accepted, He can and will produce in it everything needful for the preservation of the bond. These are peculiar feelings wrought by the Spirit; we should seek for them as produced within our own heart, examining our state upon the several dispositions described. Have I this supreme love of the object of faith, so that He lives with unrivaled dominion in my heart? Have I a willingness

to sacrifice all other affections when they rise up as obstacles to my supreme devotion to the Lord? Am I in the spirit of humility and proffering my heart with a due sense of my own unworthiness? Have I loving confidence in the power of the Lord to make me all that I ought to be? And can I trust Him to look upon and maintain His own work of grace within me?

If we answer with satisfaction to these inquiries, we have reason to rejoice, and to lay hold of the consolatory evidence of having been conducted thus far by the heavenly Guide. We should give Him praise for the dispensation, cheerfully raise our song of gratitude, and patiently, though fervently, wait for further manifestations. If unable to satisfy our own minds upon these points, we ought to be distressed, and awakened to more energy in our Christian course. To be destitute of these affections, evidences that we are either in our native death and distance from God, or that we are grieving the Spirit by allowing something in our course which impedes our way. In either case we are guilty, and lie exposed to punishment. Let us not then madly yield to this spiritual apathy, for our destitution is complete if we have not Christ, and our profession is barren if we are not in conscious union with Him.

LONGING OF HEART FOR CONSCIOUS UNION.

"I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope."—PSALM cxxx, 5.

It must be our object on the present occasion to consider the result of that anxious expression of love on the part of the believer, which we last examined. We beheld him in the experience of fervent desires after union with Christ, arising from an absorption of his affections and admiration of the Lord as the chiefest among ten thousand; and as led to exclaim with unfeigned surrender of his heart, "I am my beloved's." We must now ascertain if he be privileged to say, "And his desire is toward me," or, "My beloved is mine." See Psalm xxiii.

In answer to this interesting and important inquiry, we must, in the first place, realize some of the important doctrines which stand prominently before us in the sacred Scriptures. It is necessary in a question such as this that the *judgment* be persuaded. The mere excitement of passion or movement of feeling will not satisfy a soul sincerely anxious to determine the degree of his liberty to appropriate Christ; these may be delusive; and nothing short

of solid ground for assurance will suffice to settle the question in peace to the soul. Let us then bear in mind that Jesus has said, "No man can come to Me, except the Father draw him." John vi, 44. Let us remember that the Bible testimony is, "We love Him, because He first loved us." 1 John iv, 19. If, therefore, we are come to Christ according to the statement in our last subject, or have the consciousness that we do indeed love Him, we possess a sure witness of the divine operation in the heart, and a pledge of the free love of a covenant God. It is also expressly affirmed that he who cometh unto Christ, He "will in nowise cast out;" and that they who bring their sacrifices before the Lord shall find them accepted by Him; and that the proffered surrender of body, soul, and spirit, which it is the anxious desire of the believer that the Lord will receive, is not only a reasonable but an *acceptable* service: see John vi, 37; 1 John iv, 19; Isa. lvi, 7, 8; Rom. xii, 1. Here we have sure ground on which to establish the expectation of faith; proving, that if we answer to this description of character, we cannot either reasonably or Scripturally doubt the success of our desires. To think otherwise would be to dispute the truth and faithfulness of the Lord; and would also involve a denial of those essential doctrines which reveal to us that man is by nature a fallen creature, that he inherits an

awful apostasy from his descent, as the offspring of an alienated parent; that in this apostasy there is resolute enmity against his Maker, and also an entire impotency in everything which belongs to spiritual things; so that even were he rendered willing to return, he would still be incapable of effecting that return, excepting as he is supernaturally influenced. *Hence it will follow*, that whenever a sinner is brought to the foot of the cross, with dispositions which yearn after and long for intimate union with the Lord, he must necessarily be considered as under the mighty and covenant operation of the Holy Ghost.

But we are not left merely to *draw conclusions* which may satisfy; we are blest by the positive affirmation of God upon this point, and have innumerable passages in the Scriptures which sufficiently assure us of the purpose which Christ Himself has toward this union. Amidst striking *figures* adopted by the Holy Ghost for setting forth this willingness of incarnate love, we have an interesting passage in Cant. iii, 11, introduced by the testimony in the preceding verse. It refers to the act of redemption through the descent of the eternal Son from heaven to earth, who came as borne by His own constraining love, who formed for Himself in His human nature a chariot wherein He might be brought near to man, and, lining it with precious material of *love* divine, fitted it to be a place of safety for His re-

deemed, wherein they should dwell, and *with* Him pass into the realms of everlasting glory. The effect of this incarnate love is before us in the 11th verse, where the Church is invited to come forth to contemplate the peculiar grace of the Saviour, and to understand the nature of this joyous event. It is represented as a day of the *gladness* of the Saviour's heart, and this on account of the crown put upon His head in the day of His *espousals*, answering to the prophetic voice in Isa. liii, 11, and signifying that in every instance wherein sinners are brought to the longing desire of faith and love to Him, He sees of the travail of His soul, He reaps the reward of His suffering work, He receives a crown of glory to His head, and He accepts the profession, in gladness, in satisfaction, and with an *espousing* grace! Of this grace the Apostle speaks in writing to the Ephesians, v, 28-32, wherein he enlarges upon the love of Christ, who *gave Himself* for the Church, expressly designing hereby to present it to Himself *as a bride*, and to cherish and love, and joy in it as a wife, taking it even into mystical union with Himself; as it is expressed, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

Thus it is evident, that the desire for union is *mutual*. On the part of Christ, according to the purpose of the everlasting covenant; for what is declared respecting Israel as a nation is true also in

respect of all who compose the Lamb's wife, out of every kindred and nation, "Thou shalt call me Ishi: and shalt call me no more Baali. And I will betroth thee unto me forever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies; I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." Hos. ii, 16, 19, 20. These are privileges secured to the Church in Christ Jesus, and are designed in order to magnify the divine perfections, all of which are pledged for the saints, and will be magnified in every espoused soul. On the part of the believer the desire after union is, as we have seen, not only fervent and sincere, but the fruit of the Lord's grace, according to what is written in Ezek. xvi, 8. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness, yea, I sware unto thee and entered into a covenant with thee, and *thou becamest mine.*" In this case the word of salvation is applied with power; the soul is apprehended, and *apprehends*; and the effectual grace of the Holy Ghost fulfills what is so interestingly and emphatically set forth in Rom. vii, 1-4. According to this figure, so long as we are in a natural state, we are under the law, wedded to it as to an oppressive yoke, rendered grievous by reason of *its sanctity* and *our impotency*, as it is written, Rom. viii, 3. It is weak

through the flesh, that is, it has not energy enough to insure or enforce obedience; yet it has its inexorable demands, which it is ever urging upon the conscience of man. It, therefore, becomes bondage, and oppressive in proportion to our perception of its true nature. So long as we are in this state, we are not considered in a marriageable condition to Christ. Wherefore that must become dead which holds us in bondage, that we may be free, so as legally to be espoused to another. Accordingly Christ, having in His body satisfied the law, has slain it in respect of its bondage character to His people. And having convinced us also through the law, He has slain our ignorant expectations, and self-righteous adherence to this first husband; as the Apostle expresses it, “I through the Law am dead to the Law, that I might live unto Christ.” Gal. ii, 19. Thus all preparations for union are ready; mutual willingness—legal openings—and loving liberty!

In the ceremony of espousal among the Jews, there were certain expressive forms observed by the parties entering into contract. A public avowal of the intention was made before witnesses, certain writings were drawn up declarative of the intention of marriage which each party professed to the other, and usually the female received a piece of silver from her proposed husband as a pledge of faithfulness and truth. After this ceremony the two per-

sons were permitted to have free intercourse, from which they were previously withheld. It is no doubt in reference to these things that the idea of espousal is presented to us in the Scripture, as well adapted to represent the spiritual interests we are now examining, which consist of an appropriating act of faith, by which Christ is laid hold upon with satisfaction, and a holy persuasion of being interested in His love. It is in fact the privilege of assurance effected by the Holy Ghost. This He does through the written word, by visible distinctions, and with internal holy pledges of peace and love. Thus we are taught by the Scriptures that the saints have an anointing from the Holy One, by which they are visibly and consciously distinguished from the world which lieth in wickedness, and that they carry with them the blessed demonstration of their heritage in the powerful Comforter. 1 John v, 10, 19, 20. This is a blissful state, answerable to the desires which exist in the devoted heart; and nothing short of this will give spiritual rest to a heaven-born soul. It corresponds with the language of love we considered in our last subject, and presents the believer before us as privileged to say, "I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me."

Although we are considering the *disinterested* love of a soul that is restless after Christ, as attracted and fixed by His unspeakable excellence, we do not

wholly dismiss the idea of those attendant blessings which are inseparable from the life of faith, and which do in an abundant measure flow in with the assurance of love, and give additional blessedness to the possession. Thus it will manifestly appear, that having appropriated Christ, as espoused and united to Him, the soul will hereby obtain a great increase of *experimental* knowledge in those doctrines of grace which the Scriptures reveal. It is impossible that we should *humbly* appropriate the Lord, or feel His love shed abroad in our heart, without an attendant conviction of the marvelous act by which this blessing has been realized, the glory of which will be ascribed to God alone. Hence an experimental understanding of *election* will follow, and it will be felt and confessed that these are mercies which can only be proved through God's *good pleasure*, who purposed in Himself the wonderful plan of life, and without any consideration of merit in the favored soul, dispenses His loving-kindness. There is to such an one an unspeakable excellency in the testimony, that according to His own purpose and grace, He saved us; and bringing this testimony to individual experience, there will be no room left for anything but glorying in the Lord, and ascribing it to His sovereignty that the soul has life in Christ. Eph. i, 4-6.

In the same disposition, the doctrine of *redemption* will be understood, not only in its freeness respect-

ing the provision of the redemption price, but in respect of the individual application of the blessing, now the subject of grateful joy to the soul. He closely connects this privilege with that of electing love, knows that he could not have been chosen consistently with God's glory, but in Christ the Beloved, and lifts up his grateful expression of praise, saying, “Who *loved me, and gave himself for me.*” The propitiation is contemplated with its value before God, and its availability in behalf of his own guilty soul; and with a tenderness combined with transport he can exclaim, “I know that *my* Redeemer liveth.”

The consciousness of having holy affections now operating in his heart, leads out his spirit into enlarged views of the blessedness of an *applied* salvation: he looks upon the effects of redeeming love as thus exhibited with a holy joy in the omnipotence by which such fruits in such a heart have been produced; and he blesses the eternal Spirit, believing also that since He is the Author of this inward life He will also be the Finisher. He unites his view of sanctification with *perseverance*, and is assured of the faithfulness of that Lord who has begun the good work in him. Thus he rests in the pure doctrines of an everlasting covenant, and is able to rejoice in believing that his own name is graven upon the hands of the Lord, that He bears it likewise upon His shoulder, and so will minister to

him in all things that are good, by His own covenant government. The sacred Scriptures assure him that such are the privileges of those who are one with Christ. And now that he lays claim to this inheritance, he must believe that all things are his. 1 Cor. iii, 21-23. The spiritual delights of faith are not limited to expectations respecting present pilgrimage. This heavenly grace penetrates the clouds, and rises into the invisible world, realizing an inheritance beyond all the transitory things of time, and in which all the weariness of probation will be closed forever. Along with the assurance of union with Christ, is assurance of heirship with Him. And those wonderful possessions which he has hitherto contemplated abstractedly, as interesting in themselves and for those who might claim them, he now believes to be his own, so that he can testify, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day," 2 Tim. iv, 8. This sure expectation is founded upon an experimental acquaintance with the grace of *justification*; he is united with Christ; he, therefore, has put on Christ, and is arrayed in His righteousness as a meritorious plea for the kingdom; and according to the covenant promise contained in Rev. ii, 17, he feeds on the hidden manna, and has "*the white stone!*"

These are accompaniments of the blessing of con-

scious union with Christ; they powerfully nurture the soul in peace, and are instrumental in keeping it *consistent* in its character. The believer who in this disposition apprehends his acceptance in the Lord, has motives of the most constraining and persuasive kind toward visible devotion, and habitual correspondence of spirit with his high relationship.

If such be the blessed portion of those who are espoused to the Lord, should we not be increasingly stimulated to seek the conscious possession for ourselves, repeating the fervent supplication of love and desire, saying, "*Draw me!*" Cant. i, 4. Should we not long to experience the constraining force of divine grace thus operative in the heart, and ask for that omnipotent effect of redeeming love which brings the soul into this high fellowship? No doubt, if we have spiritual affections or discernment, such will be our ardent desire. Not to have it is an affecting demonstration that there is some serious evil unmortified in the heart. It is evident that the children of God are universally described as manifesting their new birth, either by breathings after, or rejoicings in this union; and to differ from them herein argues that we are as yet unacquainted with their peculiar desires and delights. We have the Church pressing her suit and entreating, "*Set me as a seal upon thine heart,*" Cant. viii, 6, 7; and testifying that in her heart jealousy was cruel as the grave,

and the coals thereof were as coals of fire. She is importunate therefore to be kept from everything which might cast a suspicion upon her state. And in the possession of all which fervent love demands, and in the history of individual experience, the same affections will ever be developed by the saints, for they have no desire equal to that of being able to say, “My beloved is mine, and I am His.” How is it then that we can differ from these, and yet indulge the hope of inheriting their distinctions at last? Let us not be deceived: it is but too palpably evident that in such a case we are either in a state of native alienation, or are living in an awfully inconsistent course as Christians. Let us not wickedly take refuge in the idea that so much earnestness may be dispensed with, and yet the soul be safe. There are indeed among professors some who, like the daughters of Jerusalem, are ready to reply, “What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?” Cant. v, 9; why urge us to so much devotedness, such scrupulous care, such unceasing thoughts of things that are heavenly! But observations such as these would cease forever, were we quickened by the eternal Spirit, and, as we have seen, would give place to the most devoted language of estimation of Christ, and of the decision of saints. Some there are indeed among the true disciples who exhibit a course that gives countenance to the rea-

sonings of the ignorant; and if we are among these, the subject before us should be full of condemnation and distress to the heart. Already possibly distress is lodged there, consequent upon the life of indolence, earthliness or sensual indulgence, which grieves the Holy Spirit, and so destroys the hope of assurance. This is a melancholy condition, ill becoming the bride of Christ, and quite disgraceful to such as by a profession of discipleship have pretensions to such an appellation; and it is the duty of every such Christian seriously and determinately to seek deliverance from this inward and outward depression, that God may be glorified, and their consolations answer to the promise. Eph. iv, 30. We are all persuaded that no less a standard will suffice to support us in a dying hour, or to give us *victory* in the conflict, such as the Christian should desire. It will not suffice in that serious moment to be able *only* to hope, and merely to say that we trust He will have mercy. Thus to die is but a dreary mode of passing into the presence of the dreadful Judge, and of waiting for a sentence never to be reversed, and deciding the happiness or misery of an immortal soul. If then we consider it desirable to be able when dying to say, "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and *my portion forever*," Psalm lxxiii, 26, why will we not now seek the unspeakable privilege, and appreciate the comfort of

walking through our remaining days of pilgrimage in association with the Holy Ghost as the witness of our union with the Lord? Is there anything in this from which a rational soul should start back? is it not the proper elevation of a creature endowed and blessed as man has been by his Creator? Come, then, make trial of the joyous way opened in Jesus Christ, and experienced by those who are one with Him.

In all instances wherein the privilege is known, there remains a responsibility to which the soul should be continually stirred up. Let such believers studiously cherish their distinction in the use of every appointed means, holding it humbly, and prayerfully, and joyfully in the Lord, that none such should *seem* to come short of the promise they inherit in Christ, but that all men may see the holy liberty into which Christian privilege introduces the soul. Heb. iv, 1; Neh. viii, 10. And that we may also live as they who are looking for a perfection beyond any present possession, when, the marriage of the Lamb being come, His wife shall be found to have made herself ready, wearing her royal attire, and hailing her Bridegroom's voice. Then shall *espousals* be completed in the visible union and splendor and highest dignity of the Lord's redeemed. Rev. xix, 7. This is the proper result of a union which in this world is realized through faith, and in the approaching day is to be *manifested* everlastingly.

THE SENSE OF UNION A NEW SPRING OF OBEDIENCE.

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter."—ROMANS vii, 4–6.

OUR last two subjects have afforded us the opportunity of looking into the privileged state of the believer when entering into conscious union with Christ. This forms an important period in the history of the life of faith, introducing us into many parts of the Christian course, which are to be considered as resulting from this conscious privilege.

As one of the first blessings which follow this stage of experience, we are evidently to consider the soul put in possession of a vigorous power of holiness, correspondently with the new dignity of condition and high relation which it is called to realize. And on this point we have some interesting particulars to examine. We do not intend that the believer

has not exhibited, in the progress we have already contemplated, a disposition of upright obedience; we have shown that under the operation of the Holy Ghost he has entered upon a course wherein his consciousness of sin has cost him godly anguish, has been attended with upright conflict, has produced contrition and prostration of spirit, and unfeigned surrender of self, with the hope of being wholly conformed to the will of God; insomuch that his unceasing language is, “O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.” Ps. cxix, 5. In these traits of true repentance we discover many of the excellent *acts* of obedience, proceeding from the *principle* of holiness; yet we do not perceive in them what answers to the stability of really Christian and spiritual elevation, such as the covenant has prepared for the saints, and which is only to be looked for at the period we are at present examining. Let our own observation determine this truth. It must be evident to ourselves, that in the time which precedes the assurance of faith, we are conscious of much fluctuation in our feelings, and *subtle* workings of uncertainty, even in our purposes; for notwithstanding our habitual integrity, there are almost unperceived reasonings of nature in us, which interfere with the manifest beauty of a *regular*, undeviating obedience, producing in our course a kind of inequality in our steps, easily discoverable by the highly spiritual, and

sometimes discerned also by the world, which judges us accordingly. There is likewise very frequently a mixture of bondage in our disposition, demonstrated by somewhat of a self-righteous spirit in our service; for too often we are wishing to find cause for complacency in what we are doing or feeling; and although we have renounced our *native* self, we are seeking to rest in our *sanctified* state, an evil which we betray by being *dispirited* and *dejected* under any sensible defect.

All this, it is true, belongs to an *upright* disposition, but it impedes the flow of generous obedience, because not wrought in *liberty* of spirit; and, therefore, we must consider such acts rather as tokens of what will be, than as fruits which reach the proper Christian standard. They are the effect of a real work begun, and in some degree advanced in the soul; they exhibit a “Prince’s daughter,” whose feet are beautiful with shoes,” see Cant. vii, 1. Or are “shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace,” Eph. vi, 15. There is a readiness to tread in the whole way of devotion; a sure preparation of the heart, which cometh from God. Prov. xvi, 1.

That the end for which these preparations are given is that of an *exhibition* of God’s grace in a *visible* character, corresponding with the relation now established, is evident from various passages in God’s Word.

Thus, when the Lord testifies of His grace to Zion, under the notion of a bride, or wife, or espoused one, He declares her visible and conspicuous excellency. And although some of these passages refer in a high sense to the literal Israel, and future sense of dignity reserved for that nation, we are not to forget that the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile being broken down, Christ has found a bride for Himself out of *every* kingdom, and nation, and people, and united them as one new man, or as one redeemed spouse for Himself. Rev. vii, 9; xix, 7. We may, therefore, look to the divine testimony as of enlarged application; and although not disposed to rob Israel of any portion of honor, we will lay claim to the privilege of participating in the promises, which are yea, and amen, in Christ, to all the spiritual seed of Abraham. Thus led by the Spirit, we may proceed and examine some of those parts of Scripture which bear upon the subject.

In Ezekiel xvi, 9-14, we have the history, which not only represents the condition of Israel, but the manner of God's dispensing of His kingdom to every individual believer. Having raised the soul from its spiritual death, and lifted it up from its original condition, it is washed and anointed; guilt and defilement are cleansed by the blood of Jesus, and in the Spirit's power, and the sinner is set apart for newness of life. Following upon this, we have the

adorned state of the bride. She is clothed and shod suitably to her appointment, being justified in the royal robe of her husband's righteousness, and prepared to follow Him with resolute conformity to His will. She is also "*decked with ornaments.*" These ornaments, no doubt, signify the several beauties of the new creature in Christ, and are represented by figures, which, in other parts of the Word, describe the graces of the Spirit. Thus, the hands are adorned or beautified by works of diligent love: the neck wears the golden chain, composed as it were of the several precepts, which, as links in a chain of love, adorn the faith, and prove it to be a grace that unites a soul to the living Head: the forehead is distinguished by the jewel so peculiarly pledged to the Church, all her members being sealed in their forehead, and having the name of their God visibly displayed in their profession: the ears adorned with ear-rings, according to Prov. xxv, 12, yielding an obedient attention to the voice of counsel or reproof: and as a completion of her beauty, her head receives the beautiful crown. Thus she is exhibited as queen, or royal spouse; the Lamb's wife, renowned for beauty, through the Lord's comeliness which He has put upon her. What the beautiful crown is may be satisfactorily determined, for it is written, "The Lord of Hosts shall be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of His people,"

Isa. xxviii, 5. It is to the Lord that the honor of this work is due, for He is as the anointed Saviour come to appoint beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that He might be glorified. Isa. lxi, 3. It is in this work that the bride makes her boast, wearing her Lord as her chief joy and honor, and, assenting to the exhortation, arising to put on her beautiful attire, Isa. lii, 1, and delighting to be brought unto the King in this legitimate and glorious way. Thus she answers to what is written of her, Ps. xlv: she has left her father's house, and is now invested with privileges which make her all-glorious within, and her raiment of wrought gold.

Turning to Rev. iii, 12, we meet with another testimony, equally declarative of the covenant design which respects the *visible* dignity of the redeemed. Here such as are advanced in the way, having overcome the obstacles in the way of the cross, and reached the blessed period of true fellowship with the Lord, have a promise that the Lord will make them *pillars* in the temple. They shall stand in the mystical temple, as witnesses to the Lord, monuments of divine power and love, bearing on them a sacred inscription which shall proclaim the glory of the great Redeemer. Thus it is said, "I will write upon him the name of my God," " And I will write upon him my new name:" that is, visibly demonstrate

in each of these pillars of memorial the glory of the divine perfections, in the work of redeeming love. “*The name of my God,*” that is, mine in the covenant, which constitutes me second Adam: “I ascend to my God and your God.” “*My new name,*” that is, my character as man’s incarnate friend, deliverer, life. All this we know to be verified in the saints, for they are the property that God has redeemed from destruction, by a display of power, love, truth, justice, etc., all working honorably for man through the propitiation that is in Christ Jesus. In consequence, this property is called forth and *marked* or *sealed*, according to the vision recorded in Ezekiel ix, 4, or the parable spoken by Jesus in John x, 3, 27.

But we may inquire how and by what means do the saints fulfill these figures? how are they constituted pillars? and how is the inscription made? We assuredly know that no power short of that which is infinite could accomplish any part of this work. And when we look for a hand by which we may expect to see the fulfillment of these hopes, it is our joy to find that Jehovah undertakes the gracious work. It is in this light that the inspired Psalmist looked upon his own exercise of gifts as a prophet, so that his tongue, whilst loosened to speak in enraptured strains of the Holy One, was but an *instrument*, it was as “*the pen of a ready writer.*” Just so we may affirm in re-

spect of this writing of memorial, not in this case indeed using man's faculty of speech as the instrument for making the inscription, but with the finger of the living God, and as it were dipped in the heart's blood of Jesus, making the indelible impression. Short of this, no living inscription can be produced, no effectual impress be secured: but by this omnipotence, a writing is effected, which neither time, nor malice, nor fraud shall ever erase.

Behold then the *prepared material*, even the sanctified and softened faculties and affections of the believer, made ready to receive the impress. Behold the willing and omnipotent inscriber, even the eternal covenant Spirit Himself, engaged to effect the sacred register. And behold the inscription, even the holy and blessed commandment, according to the divine promise, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and *write* it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people." "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments:" see Jer. xxxi, 33; Ezek. xxxvi, 26, 27; Heb. viii, 10. A privilege evidently not limited to Israel, since the Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, has this conclusive passage, "Ye are manifestly declared to

be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.” 2 Cor. iii, 3.

Thus we are led to the testimony so often referred to in Rom. viii, 2, 4, wherein this spiritual elevation and conformity to the divine law is styled “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” The *spirit of life*, that is, the eternal Holy Spirit, who is life, and who in His covenant office is the author of spiritual life to dead souls. John vi, 63; iii, 5. “*In Christ Jesus*,” that is, possessed by, and operative in them consequently upon his being Christ’s in a covenant relation for His people, and as propitiated through Christ’s finished work. *The law of the spirit of life*, because it is the new principle of *governing power* in all who are united to Christ, according to what has been shown of Rom. vii, 4, 6, being that vigorous and holy principle which is continually bringing forth fruit unto God, not in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of the spirit. To believers, thus prepared, united, taught, and quickened, obedience becomes *an existence*. It is as the compliance of the members of the body with the volitions of the mind, being a *law of action* in the new creature, and so prompt, immediate, and distinctive, as the Apostle shows by the experience of his own soul, recorded in Gal. ii, 20.

In an obedience of this description there is peculiar delight, for it is attended with a sense of *power* to obey, so as to raise the soul above the depression of fears and doubts. A privilege which is singularly precious when duties are arduous, and obedience conducts us into situations of affliction of body or mind. It is a sustaining thought that grace *shall* be equal to our day; that sin *shall not* have the dominion; that even if called to seal our witness by death, "behold we live," having an existence which no enemy can approach, and an eternal rest to which death shall introduce the soul. These are assurances which arise out of blessed certainty of our union with the Lord. There is also in this obedience a pure delight, arising out of sincere *love of the authority* and *appreciation* of the precept. And there is a provision also for abiding peace, even in circumstances where this privilege must be lost, were it not for a persuasion that as united to Christ, no enemy can destroy us; and that even in those most lamentable times when we groan under the influence of corruption, or bewail our inconsistencies and shortcomings, we still possess the living source of life and love, who will arise to our help and complete our deliverance. It is in these views that the believer exclaims, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise, when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me." Micah vii, 8. And it is

hence that he obtains invigorating motives, again and again, to contend for the prize.

Thus it will be evident that such an one glorifies the Lord, by a holy consistency of principle and practice with his relation to Christ as his realized Lord and Portion; and that he is one of those favored souls in whom God's grace and name are magnified. Gal. i, 24.

Let us endeavor to ascertain whether we have these visible distinctions; it is of eternal moment, and should be considered by each of us, individually, as a point on which an humble solicitude should be exercised. By examination of God's word respecting the experience of one who is sensibly united to Christ, we shall without difficulty be enabled, not only to determine whether we may lay claim to the blessing of saying, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me," but whether we may advance into the further stage of privilege also, and add, that the life which we now live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God. Surely we cannot complain of any obstacle to the discovery of our real state before God, when we have such multiplied testimonies so explanatory of the experience and disposition of the Lord's children. On the present occasion, for instance, we are assisted, and have only to compare what we have read with the course we are pursuing, in order to decide the question. It is an undoubted

fact that the disciples of Jesus follow him *whithersoever* he goeth. Rev. xiv, 4, 5. Have we this inward impelling law of love? Is it a law which is gladly accepted as a delightful obligation, as a service in which is perfect freedom, not with a tardy and reluctant disposition, but a cheerful readiness to every counsel that we believe to be of God? If so, we have a joyful manifestation of the Spirit's grace, in which we do well to exult, seeing that it is hereby He decketh us with ornaments, and supplies us with lasting principles unto holiness. And we shall also do well, as possessed of such distinctions, to stir up the spiritual gift that is in us. There is no other spring of peaceful, persevering service, but what we derive from union with Christ. All efforts after consistency made in any other way will be found vain. In Christ is our fruit found, Hos. xiv, 8, and by this oneness with Him, *abundance* will be produced. It is our duty to act in faith upon this assurance, coming out into a distinguished profession of the faith. We are to be in the world as *legible epistles*, known and read of all men, or exalted pillars, inviting the traveler's eye, and presenting the important inscription of the law, as Christ's redeemed. We are to appear suitably attired with our dignity and high station, that men may perceive the exaltation to which Christ's bride is raised. This must be done by a conduct that is conformed to the mind of

God, and in a spirit that is manifestly not of this world. How can this be effected, but by supernatural existence? How can men *know* this is our privilege, but by decided discipleship? Let us, therefore, be increasingly vigilant in separating from the world, and in striving to live as redeemed by the blood of Christ.

If on examination of the heart we cannot discover these principles; if there be no peculiarity of affections, no visible profession, no exhibited ornaments, what shall we say of our miserably forlorn and destitute condition? It is impossible to conceive of a misery so awful and extensive as that which at this very moment overspreads such a soul; “and what will ye do in the *end thereof?*” None but the wife will sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb: none but she shout the high hallelujah which shall proclaim the Bridegroom’s praise: none else shall escape the condemnation, or be rescued from going down into the pit. Is it not, therefore, a fearful thing to trifle away the transitory moments of time, whilst hastening to such a tremendous eternity? And should not the self-condemnation which results from comparing the experience of God’s heritage with that of the wretchedly blasted soul that is still in its native alienation from the Lord, be sufficient to suggest the necessity of seeking the only remedy in Christ Jesus?

Here let us pause; and, previously to a closer examination of the character of the spouse, meditate upon what constitutes a bliss thus pure, lasting, and peculiar: that so we may be induced by the Spirit's persisting grace to bend the knee of a suppliant, and ask the visitations of life and mercy!

THE EXHIBITION OF PECULIAR HOLINESS.

“My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens and to gather lilies. I *am* my beloved’s and my beloved *is* mine: he feedeth among the lilies.”—CANT. vi, 2, 3.

WE will now give our attention to the state of a believer’s heart as cultivated, or replenished with the principle of holiness derived from union with Christ, and producing a region wherein both himself and the Lord find sacred delight. This is represented to us by a variety of figures borrowed from natural objects, one of which we find in the testimony which the Church gives of her beloved, “My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies: I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine; he feedeth among the lilies.” Cant. vi, 2, 3. Here the state of the Church, and the members of the Church, are very interestingly represented by a fruitful and fragrant garden, which, as exhibiting the care and skill of the great proprietor, preserves the idea which we stated in the last subject, namely, that

the covenant design of God is to produce in His people a *visible* dignity, consisting of *visible* holiness, and corresponding with the high relation of a redeemed soul to Christ as its Lord and Husband.

In proceeding to investigate the subject, we must in the first place observe, that a distinction is ever to be kept in view as existing in the spiritual truth inculcated by this emblem: we must discriminate between the *soil* into which the seed is sown, and the *seed* itself. This is a very important distinction, which, if lost sight of, would involve some of the essential doctrines of the faith, and introduce a confusion into the nature of our experience. Therefore, it will be profitable to call up our reflections on this occasion into a suitable act. The *soil* is the heart as renewed by divine grace, or the faculties and affections of man rescued from the tempter's power, and brought into possession of their proper owner. Thus we have seen in the foregoing pages, that in conversion God accomplishes His own blessed will, by separating the soul from the world, taking it as it were from the wide waste and open field, and by a mighty act of power setting it apart for culture: thus it is written, "I have *chosen* you out of the world," John xv, 19; "Ye are a *chosen* generation," 1 Peter ii. 9; "The elect's sake, whom *he hath chosen*," Mark xiii, 20. Thus separated, we have seen how the property comes under God's cultivating dispensation.

sations. The fallow ground is broken up by conviction and experience, and the chosen spot is hedged round and prepared for future produce: figures assumed with this design in Jer. iv, 3, 4; Isa. v, 2. It is thus that the soul is made what Jesus describes it, "*honest and good,*" Luke viii, 15, and prepared for the reception of the seed. The *seed* that is sown, may be considered either as the word of God, or the Spirit of God, for in both instances the Scriptures give this appellation. Thus, in Luke viii, 11, it is written, "The seed is the word of God;" and in 1 Peter i, 23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by* the word of God." In either case it is descriptive of a new existence wrought by the Holy Ghost, and imparting to the soil an imperishable possession. Of the seed, we must conclude it is *perfect*. If it be the written word, it is faultless, pure, able to make us wise to salvation, sufficient to furnish the man of God with direction for every good word and work, and justifying the testimony, "The law of the Lord is perfect," Ps. xix, 7; "Thy word is very pure," Ps. cxix, 140. If it be of the *Divine Spirit* that the Scripture thus speaks, it follows of course that this seed is perfect, and that whatsoever is to be considered *His* work in the soul must correspond with His own excellence, for "*His work* is perfect." Deut. xxxii, 4. These observations are intended

to show that impediments, or hindrances, to the true development of the plant or flower do not arise from any evil in the *quality of the seed*. Were this to develop itself according to its own excellency, we should behold the gradual opening forth of a perfect production, and every lovely flower and fruit in the spiritual garden would answer to the goodness of the seed sown. Hindrances are, therefore, to be attributed to the soil, or to something remaining in our faculties and affections unfriendly or prejudicial to the growth of heavenly plants; and this we readily understand, when we credit the revelation which shows that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," Gal. v, 17, or feel that there is a law in our members warring against the law in our minds, and that "the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy," James iv, 5. It is in consequence of these evils that sometimes lamentable *imperfection* is discoverable in the Christian productions; so that even of these it may be said, thorns and briars growing up, they bring no fruit properly to perfection; and are chargeable with a state which the Lord severely rebukes, saying, "I have not found thy works perfect," Rev. iii, 2. Hence we perceive the necessity of having a spirit of watchfulness, and a right understanding of the privilege of which we are now to speak, looking to the *true* result of divine culture, and for the *proper* production of a heaven-born plant.

We will now examine some of those productions in which the Lord delights, and from which the believer has conscious joy.

We may select some of the principal fruits which grow in the regenerate soul, and entering into this garden of the Lord, examine the singular beauties. Among these we behold, standing in conspicuous beauty, the precious grace of Faith. Of this production we are to form the highest estimate, not that we would give more prominent excellence to *one* holy plant than to another, as they are fruits of the Spirit, but that in the *order* of this spiritual existence faith is considered as a kind of parent plant, since it is hereby that we instrumentally apprehend the *object* revealed in the Scriptures, and derive to the vital principles new vigor and sustaining supplies. It is introduced into the soul for the purpose of securing all the privileges of a chosen and consecrated state, and is consequently highly commended in the word. It is the “faith of God’s elect.” Titus i, 1. It is the faith of which Jesus is the author and finisher. Heb. xii, 2. It is the faith which gives evidence of things not seen, and substance to things hoped for. Heb. xi, 1. It is the faith which, being mixed with the word, gives invigorating energy to what we hear and receive. Heb. iv, 2. And in short, it is the faith which, as so constituted by the gracious Giver, imparts a power of universal evangelical obedience, as

it is written, “this is the work of God, that *ye believe* on Him whom He hath sent,” John vi, 29.

Advancing further into the sacred spot, we contemplate the wide-spreading tree, which we may distinguish to be *holy fear*. It is designed to be a plant of health to the garden, and to extend its overshadowing boughs throughout. It is an absolute requisite to the preservation and beauty of every other production, and, therefore, forms a principal feature of that life which the covenant promises, “I will put my fear in their hearts,” Jer. xxxii, 40: a promise which is enforced as an important possession by the apostolic precept, “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear,” Heb. xii, 28. Our natural propensity is to irreverence, as is evident not only in the bold and daring conduct of the licentious, but in the disposition, deportment and language of many professed Christians, who walk carelessly and inconsistently, indulging in levity, and trespassing against the spirit of vigilance. As a counteraction to this evil, the Lord plants in His garden this salutary *Fear*.

But this is no enslaving dread: the overshadowing boughs are not designed to shed a gloomy aspect on the spicy beds and flowers, but, on the contrary, to preserve them in legitimate liveliness, by preventing those evils which, if allowed, would gather into gloomy clouds, overspread the sky, and fall in deso-

lating storms. The garden of the Lord is precious in His sight, and He designs that it should produce gladdening influences to the soul. Hence, *lively hope* forms one of its peculiar plants, and impregnates the air with its reviving fragrancy. The blessed and enlivening effects of this heavenly grace is very forcibly expressed by Jer. xvii, 7, 8, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Love will lend its pure savor to the blest abode, for here the holy affections of a devoted, simple heart are free, alert, and fervent. Of this, as belonging to the culture of the Lord, the Spirit expressly testifies, "The fruit of the Spirit is love," Gal. v, 22. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Rom. v, 5. A love which is described as tender, constraining, true, and, therefore, styled the love of espousals. Jer. ii, 2.

To these we may add this blessed assurance, that as an attendant upon such dispositions there will ever be the sure and sacred *Peace*, of which the desert world is desolate. To this garden of the Lord we must look if we inquire after the manifestation of

peace, for to this sacred region it was bequeathed—“My peace I give unto you,” John xiv, 27. A bequest which belongs to the divine covenant, for it is one of the privileges secured to the saints thereby, as it is written, “Great shall be the peace of thy children,” Isa. liv, 13; according to the Scripture account of Jesus’ kingdom, which is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,” Rom. xiv, 17.

These are all requisites toward the visible development of the beauty which we find ascribed to the Church; and with these there will always be the accompaniment of every other supernatural fruit flowing from union with Jesus, and the infusion of the Spirit as a law of obedience in the soul. Many highly interesting and practical considerations belong to this covenant arrangement.

In the first place, it is thus that the great Proprietor of the property is glorified, or crowned, in His espousals; for hereby the world has an exhibition of the covenant which it can in some degree understand. This we can readily comprehend by looking to the emblem before us. Who, for instance, does not know when, in the course of his travels, he passes by or comes into the vicinity of a vineyard, or garden, or bed of spices? He possibly has no right of access, no interest in the property; yet the fragrance is a decisive evidence that valuable plants are within the enclosure; yea more, he is also

refreshed by the sweetness, and will speak words of commendation of the plants. Just so will it be in the existence of a Christian, whose conversation and walk give forth the true sweetness of the heavenly life; there is something in it which constrains a tribute from the world, and many times produces even an affection of gratitude and love in those more immediately connected with him, so that in this sense we may say, “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them.” Isa. xxxv, 1.

That the *Church* is refreshed by such sacred plants within her walls will not be questioned. It is in this way that believers are rendered blessings to each other. Many times the inexperienced, the fearful, or weak, are exceedingly excited, comforted and strengthened by the sweet savor of those plants we have been contemplating. And by the faith, fear, hope, love, and peace which yield their fragrancy from the inward garden in a brother’s soul, they are quickened in the life of faith; whilst the more established are mutual helps and joy to each other: and God the Author of all is magnified in them. Eph. iv, 16.

Angels also draw from such regions fresh motives for new tributes of adoring love and praise. They look upon the wonderful productions which succeed to the baneful and unprofitable fruits of the native soil; and knowing from whence the change pro-

ceeds, they lift their admiring contemplation to the everlasting throne, and extol their God. Thus, these heavenly inhabitants of the higher world are instructed to His praise. Eph. iii, 10. Nor can we doubt that even before fallen diabolical spirits the Lord is glorified, when they, beholding the fair garden of His grace, see how their malignant designs are subverted, how sinners are rescued from the curse, and how effectual the love of Him who undertook man's cause has proved in these favored scenes. That such is the result to evil spirits seems unquestionable by the record we have of Jehovah's appeal respecting Job. See Job. i, 8.

It is important to remember also that a vast proportion of individual enjoyment is connected with this state. There is a reward of grace which is reserved for the faithful even whilst they are here below; and this reward is said to be gathered *out of the garden*. Thus we read, in reference to this very point, that in the remuneration which is arranged respecting the productions of Christ's vineyard, He must have a thousand pieces of silver, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred: Cant. viii, 11, 12; that is, the chief proprietor, who is Christ, must have supreme tribute, but the delegated keepers shall have a rich reward for their diligence. And so, under another figure, the same truth is affirmed, for the Lord, entering into his garden, and gathering His

pleasant fruits, on which He does Himself vouchsafe to feed, invites his people to *participate*, saying, “I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” And correspondently it is said in Prov. xiv, 14, “A good man shall be satisfied from himself.” A vigilant believer cannot but know if his garden be fruitful, prosperous, productive; knowing it to be so, he cannot but rejoice. It is pleasurable to him to look upon his thriving plants. And although his great design is to bring forth abundantly *for his Lord*, he experiences even by this very affection, when gratified, an unspeakable delight of love. These are feelings very beautifully set forth in some of the passages which we find in the book of Canticles. Thus we read the joyful conscious assurance of the Lord’s complacent pleasure in His garden. “He feedeth among the lilies.” Cant. ii, 16. “Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.” Cant. iv, 16. “At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.” Cant. vii, 13. This is, therefore, no legal spirit of bondage, but the confidence of joyful liberty, conveying to the soul an indescribable enjoyment, into which Jesus the Lord graciously enters, delighting to meet and satisfy these fervent and pure desires.

Thus, there is a mutual joy, a joy belonging to

oneness of heart, of spirit, of interest. And we behold the expression of the union subsisting between Christ and the espoused soul, in characters altogether corresponding with the singular and blissful espousals.

We should prove our own selves in every advancing stage of experience through which we are passing in this investigation of the Christian's progress. And ere we dismiss this part of the subject, we shall do well to look to the soil within ourselves, and see whether there be anything like the productions of a garden of the Lord. That there is a positive necessity for the fruits, or plants, which have been specified, will be ascertained by God's own word. It is written, "Without *faith* it is impossible to please Him." Heb. xi, 6. It is proclaimed, "Know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my *fear* is not in thee." Jer. ii, 19. The wretchedly criminal state of a *hopeless* soul is affectingly recorded, "Thou saidst, there is no hope, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." That *love* is a requisite we read by the Apostle's testimony, that no deeds or profession will avail where this disposition is not, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by *love*." Gal. v, 6. Whilst in respect of *peace*, the absence thereof is proclaimed

to be a mark of the apostate man who knows not God. "The way of peace have they not known." Rom. iii, 17. With these passages clearly before us, we can make no mistake, unless we willfully and perversely close our eyes. And it settles the judgment we ought to pass upon our own state, if we find not such dispositions within us.

It is especially terrible if this barrenness remains in the midst of privileges and opportunities, as is not unfrequently the case. "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it," and still produces "thorns and briers" only, "is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." Heb. vi, 7, 8. And places favored with a gospel dispensation, that is *abused*, are hastening to the judgment which will throw down the fence, and give them to the beasts of the earth, or to the desolating curse of judicial barrenness. Isa. v, 6.

If we are blest by the more precious evidence of having the fruits that are here described, let us learn to use the distinction legitimately, diligently tracing it up to its glorious *origin*; remembering, that it is from Jesus our fruit is found; gratefully blessing Him for that sovereign grace which separated us from the world, and that patient love which has continued to cultivate the soil, keeping the garden *for the Lord*, and ever seeking His presence there as the joy and rejoicing of the soul;

knowing that in this the blessedness of the inward Eden consists, for vain would be plants, and flowers, and fruits, were not our souls' Beloved with us in the consecrated spot. Let us be instructed by the diligence we see expressed by many in their natural state, who for the purpose of adorning their dwelling, to please and gratify the objects of their affection, spare no cost or pains. And let us emulate the higher expressions from higher motives in love of Him who died for us. If we have this disposition we shall know *how* to pluck, and eat the fruit, according to the privilege of love; and our own experience will be a blessed answer to the voice of Jesus' bride echoing through the sacred page!



KEEPING OF THE HEART BY VIGILANCE.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it *are* the issues of life.—PROV. iv, 23.

OUR last subjects have exhibited the exceeding blessedness of the soul that is privileged by the grace of the eternal covenant, and that the divine witness, which proclaims the conspicuous and visible glory to which believers are ordained, is no vain and empty testimony. The word of the Lord is true; and the people of the Lord are visibly distinguished: and blessed be His name, the favored regions consecrated by His sovereign grace are rendered fruitful in holiness, so that they properly answer to the emblem of the well-cultivated earth, and are, in a spiritual sense, the gardens of the Lord.

We must not, however, whilst contemplating the privileges of the believer, lose sight of that state of exposure, and trial, which attend him during his continuance in this world: so long as he is in the world, he will find himself encompassed by foes, and his distinctions will not exempt him from the necessity of living in vigilance. This is manifestly

a part of the Christian existence: and the very mention of his peculiar heritage, as precious and chosen by the Lord, at once conveys to us the notion that he lies exposed to peril from those quarters whence the enemies of the Lord proceed. We have considered the believer as chosen and separated from the midst of the waste and wilderness world, for the purpose of becoming a beautiful Eden, wherein God might delight, and we believe him to be like a walled garden enclosed on every side. But he is still, although *not of* the world, *in* the world. He is in it, not merely exhibiting the contrast between what is waste and desolate with what is cultivated and fruitful, but as exposed to certain *evils* arising from the *inhabitants* of the desert from which he has been separated. Our blessed Lord has many infinitely wise reasons for allowing His heritage to be a while in these circumstances: but He does Himself declare them to be perilous and trying. Thus in His intercessory prayer for His disciples, when He was about to leave them, we hear Him expressing His holy solicitude in their behalf, And now, Father, “ I come to thee;” “ but these are in the world, and I come to thee.” “ Whilst I was with them in the world” I kept them. “ Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me.” “ I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the

evil." See John xvii, 11, 15. The cause of the evil, of which He speaks, He testifies to His disciples, "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." John xv, 19. And thus He seals His witness of their inheritance here below, saying, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." John xvi, 33.

The *nature* of those evils which are thus foretold will be readily comprehended, if we enter into the Scripture account of the world, which, being described as a wilderness, or forest, or desert, is, according to these images, held forth as containing *inhabitants* which agree with the place of their abode. These are said to be *wild beasts*. Thus when Daniel had his vision from the Almighty, showing him what monarchies and kingdoms would arise in the world, he sees them represented by the lion, the leopard, and the bear. Dan. vii, 17. When Peter received the heavenly revelation respecting the ingathering of the Gentiles, he beheld them under the emblem of wild beasts, and four-footed beasts of the earth, and all manner of creeping things. Acts x, 12. Jude also describes all natural men as following a bestial instinct: "What they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves," Jude 10. Peter adopts the same figures, showing that men who follow their own perverse ways and delusions are like those brute beasts that are made

to be taken and destroyed; that is, savage, fierce, hurtful; and that they will perish in their own deceiving. 2 Pet. ii, 12. And Paul, when speaking of his own conflicting life as a witness for the truth, has this remarkable expression, “If after the *manner of men* I have fought with beasts at Ephesus.” 1 Cor. xv, 32.

But *general* terms do not suffice the Holy Spirit, when showing this awful state of nature. He therefore assumes such as are particular: and when describing the spirit of the wicked against the prosperity of the Church, he gives them appellations taken from the different descriptions of injurious animals, and adapted to the special demonstration of enmity to be expected from each. Thus in Psalm lxxx, 13, they are described as the *wild boar* out of the forest: in Psalm x, 9, as the lion lurking in his den, and watching to devour: in Luke x, 3, as ravening wolves, among whom the lambs are sent forth: in Psalm lxiii, 10, as destroying foxes, who will be executioners of vengeance: in Isaiah xlvi, 11, as a ravenous bird called from the east, to do God’s vindictive work. These are also under the government and instigation of the great apostate, Satan, who is in his usurpations styled the prince of this world; the prince of the power of the air; and who ranges the wilderness world, seeking for his prey. 1 Peter v, 8.

In these appellations, as given to the inhabitants of the world, we have awful and solid truths conveyed to the mind ; and they are all assumed by our heavenly Teacher expressly for our instruction, and to awaken the saints to understand the nature of their perils, and the spirit of watchfulness which is consequently required.

Let us now call to our recollection the lovely spot wherein the fruits, flowers, and plants of the Lord are found ; for it is against these that the inhabitants of the world are confederate. We must, therefore, expect that attempts will be made correspondently with the character of the adversary, to introduce desolation into the garden, or to prevail in impeding the growth, or marring the beauty of the plants. Much instruction on this point may be obtained by considering these several beasts of prey, in connection with the nature of the assault they are described as making. Thus of the wild boar, it is said that his object is to *root up* or *lay waste* the vine. This has a special application to the nation of Israel, and is well known to describe the suffering lot of this ancient people, as open to the inroads of savage, barbarous, infidel, and oppressive men, who from time to time have desolated this vine. The once beautiful plant, whose boughs spread wide around, affording blessings to the earth in which it had been planted, is now withered and blasted, a melancholy spectacle

in the world. Nevertheless, the Lord is magnified hereby, for persecutors were instruments of his displeasure. We, however, have to look to the *disposition of this enemy*, for it shadows forth what still abideth in the breasts of men against the vine, wherever it may be: and the Christian garden lies exposed to the hatred and desolating designs of the persecutors, equally with Israel of old. This will be determined by the history of the Church in all generations.

The design of the ravening wolf is the same, but it is expressed more subtilely. Instead of visibly ferocious passions, it assumes the form of friendly feeling, and is described by our Lord, They “come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” Matt. vii, 15. So Paul forewarns the Ephesians, that after his departure, there would arise from among themselves grievous wolves, not sparing the flock. Acts xx, 29. This description of enemy clearly represents false teachers, founders of heresy, men seeking the *gains* to be obtained through the ministry, and sacrificing every sacred truth for the end of private advantage.

The cunning fox may appear in the first instance to answer exactly to the wolf, yet there appears to be a distinction: and the prayer of the Church, along with the rebuke given to Israel, may serve to expound the Spirit’s meaning. See Cant. ii, 15,

“Take us the little foxes, which spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes:” and Ezek. xiii, 4, 5. “O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge.” These words convey the idea of those less discernible evils which are found to militate against the health of the soul, when perhaps little observed or feared; and it seems by the context in Ezekiel to intend such teachers as speak a vision out of their *own imagination*, and say Peace, when there is no peace. Such are the ministers, or professing Christians, who propose a scheme of mere morals, a system of philosophy, from the reasoning of the natural mind, instead of the strong foundation and beautiful superstructure of the true faith.

The ravenous birds of the air are an apt figure of the innumerable evils which arise in common life from the men of this world, in their various characters and baneful influences, by which they do, as it were, frequently seem to crop the tender twig, or mar or carry off the precious fruit which we desire to behold on every plant within the sacred enclosure.

And awful indeed it is to know, that all these are not only instigated by their own determined enmity to truth, but that they are likewise moved by the diabolical and restless foe to God and man; for he is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Eph. ii, 2.

But these are not the only perils which attend the garden of the Lord : it is not merely from foes that, comparatively speaking, we may call *outward*, that the precious plants are threatened. Let us call to mind what has been stated respecting the nature of the *soil* of which this garden is composed ; recollecting that from this inward region such things may be produced as will obstruct and injure its proper productions. The natural heart is prolific of every evil. The corruption of our nature is still alive within us. And on this account the Apostle earnestly exhorts believers, saying, “ Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” Heb. xii, 15. We cannot have any *experience*, or any observation of the state of others, without feeling an immediate conviction that this is requisite. Painfully do we know that the bosom is liable to many sad interruptions to its visible health and beauty, by reason of the weeds of indolence, presumption, earthliness, creature feeling. These are abominations springing up from the heart, and if allowed or unperceived, will shed a baneful influence, and even in the Lord’s garden prevent the perfection of those plants which we are bound to cultivate. It is true that *the life* is imperishable, and the heart still alive to God ; but, as the Bride expresses it, there may yet be an induced state

of *sleep* that is highly criminal: it is inconsistent, it gives opportunity for other enemies to advance. It is a grief to the Holy Ghost, and is severely chastened by the Lord: see Eph. iv, 30.

We should be aware of the design of our enemy, and of the tendency of indwelling sin. And whilst reflecting upon the several foes against which we have to guard, recollect also that *every* assault is made against *those plants*, which in our former chapter we examined in the garden. It is faith, and fear, and hope, and love, and peace, that are attempted. The violence or fraud of the enemy is directed with an aim to overturn our profession, and either by terrors or deception to remove us from the Foundation in whom we are rooted. And we find experimentally that by these perils our simplicity or our dependence, our expectation, or our fervor, are impaired, unless we promptly detect and resolutely resist the assailants; and unquestionably whenever these affections are depressed, our *peace* is proportionably so, and in some unhappy instances it is allowed, as a chastisement to us for our negligence, to exhibit the appearance of a leafless trunk.

Spiritual discernment in these particulars will prove exceedingly beneficial to the Christian, and will enforce the precept so mercifully given, “Keep thy heart with all diligence.” There is a responsibility laid upon every individual believer to look

well to his own soul, and diligently to tend the plants: we should discharge this obligation by resolute warfare, so as to resist the ravenous beasts which come against the garden; and by incessant attention to the soil, so as to destroy and root up every weed as it may appear: and by perpetual attention to the *plants themselves*, which require the ministration of those means for their vigor which the Lord has ordained. Thus, for example, the grace of faith must be *nurtured* by the blessed testimony through which it was first begotten. If we would maintain this disposition in its vigorous character, we must study the word, lay up sound doctrine, acquaint ourselves with the revelation of promise and precept, praying for divine illumination and establishment, and thus possessing a clear, impartial, and comprehensive view of the glorious truths faith is ordained to embrace. If we would further holy fear, we must have recourse to the divine manifestations by which the *name* of Jehovah is revealed, meditating upon our God in His infinite justice, truth, power, love, and especially as *exhibited in Christ*: the *way* of salvation must be frequently contemplated as a manifestation of the exceeding glory of God, and the holiness of His nature and laws, that thus we may be deterred from trifling, presumption, or negligence in our profession, and possess this grace of fear in all its friendly influence. Our hope must be continually

fed and excited by retrospects of the past, calling to mind what the Lord has already done for our soul, His patient forbearance, His free and willing mercy, His innumerable acts of delivering, preserving grace, His answers and prayer, and all His ways of matchless goodness, on which we have lived up to this hour; hereby hope will make vigorous shoots, it will exhibit its lively character, it will be enabled to triumph over the despondency of nature, or the assaults of subtle foes; and gathering confidence from God's past deeds, it will gratefully trust for, and anticipate blessings to come. Love will receive a suitable nourishment by meditations such as the believer delights to engage in. And if we are living answerably to our privilege, we shall cherish this blessed plant, by frequenting in spirit those scenes where Jesus, our soul's Beloved, displayed His love to us. Thus we shall look to the time when as a Babe in Bethlehem He entered upon the wild world, and came to encounter the beasts of prey for our sakes. We shall follow Him through His ministry of grace to the miserable, go with Him to the scene of agony in the garden, follow Him to the dying hour on Calvary, wait by the sacred tomb and see Him slumber there, follow to the heights of glory and behold Him reigning on the throne. And with all these objects before the mind and heart in their attractive force, we shall endeavor to combine

the heart-conquering assurance—All this He did for me! Love so indulged and nurtured will give forth its lovely fruits, and taking large possession of the soil within, will be demonstrated as the vigorous work of God. Peace will be sweetly cherished in connection with all these, but we must give it special care, and with a diligent eye look well to its roots, see that there be no inconsistency, clear it of the choking weeds of earthliness, see that no evil produce of the soil, such as *self*-dependence, twine around its roots; and with prayerful appropriation of the Lord, seek to preserve it a clean and healthy plant.

These are Scripturally prescribed methods for the culture of the garden, and belong to that part of the responsibility, to keep the property, which devolves upon the believer. It is very true, that unless *the Lord* is our keeper, we watch in vain, and this responsibility is indeed *His*, equally as ours; for He has condescended to have equal interest in the property, and to pledge Himself to this work, as we shall show in our next subject. But on this occasion we have to direct our particular inquiry into our own duties, as constituted by Him responsible for the keeping of the garden. We will, therefore, here suspend our inquiry, and turn our thought upon the several particulars which this investigation has brought before us. Blessed is the covenant promise which meets us in the sacred record, engaging for

faithful blessings to come down upon us, "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not." Isa. lviii, 11. "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon." Isa. xxxv, 9. These are *faithful* sayings, proving that on the part of our God every provision has been abundantly made for our encouragement. And that unless we move Him to displeasure, and induce the correction which such enemies may inflict, we have nothing to dread, notwithstanding we are *in* the world! Our precious plants shall live amidst the desert's howling blasts, and shed their fragrance around, superior to every baneful weed that would impede their health.

KEEPING OF THE HEART BY COVENANT PROTECTION.

"I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest *any* hurt it, I will keep it night and day."—ISAIAH xxvii, 3.

WE re-enter the spiritual garden which we have lately contemplated, that we may on the present occasion direct our further attention to the sources whence its safety stands secure, this being an interest of too much importance to be left without satisfactory conclusions on which the soul may repose. The individual responsibility of the believer, to watch and keep the sacred region, has been sufficiently insisted upon. But experience will demonstrate, that unless there be a more sure defence than any which can arise out of our own vigilance, fear and apprehension must still prevail; and that, in fact, "except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Ps. cxxvii, 1. We, therefore, proceed to consider, as a point of interest standing in close connection with the Christian experience, on what ground we may rest assured that our garden shall be defended from the foe, and the precious plants of grace be nurtured to perfection in our souls.

That a *firm foundation* for this confidence exists will no doubt be credited by all who profess to believe in the omniscience and power of Almighty God ; and the disciples of Jesus will turn the eye of faith on Him as demonstrating this infinite grace in covenant love. But it is requisite to give Him glory by understanding the manner in which this merciful regard is directed toward the saints ; and much of our own stability in peace is involved in so doing. We are not kept by a mere act of power, or mercy, or even of love considered abstractedly from the relation we bear to Christ. It is as *property* possessed by Him that we are the subjects of such perpetual preservation, a consideration which places our safety on very peculiar ground. In this light we behold the *Lord Jesus* as having a responsibility, and as individually interested to discharge it faithfully ; His own possession and honor being concerned in the safety, beauty, and fruitfulness of His chosen heritage. Thus whilst we, as believers, are exhorted to glorify Him by correspondent devotion to His name, He also is pledged to glorify Himself by accomplishing in us all those fruits which are by Him, to the praise of the eternal Name. And thus we read, in John xvii, 12, an acknowledgment of the responsibility, and a holy sense of faithfulness therein, “ Those that thou hast given me, I have kept, and none of them is lost.” We are consequently to consider that

Christ Jesus stands interested in the work of keeping His saints, hereby designing to give proof of His Messiahship, of His victory over Satan, and of His truth in the privileges which He has engaged to bestow on His people. See John xii, 30, 31 : Jude 20 ; 2 Thess. iii, 3.

We have likewise express and solemn promises which the Lord has voluntarily and abundantly given for the consolation of His people in this respect. None can be more comprehensive than that which we find in Isaiah xxvii, 3 : "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Parallel with which, we read in Jer. xxxi, 12 : "Their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all." And in Cant. iv, 12, the privilege is again before us under the figure of a garden enclosed, and a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed : this is (according to the well-known custom in countries where springs of water are among the rarest and most precious possessions afforded to man) an interesting allusion to royal prerogative, which was used to shut up, seal, and secure fountains, etc., for royal service. Thus Christ's beloved one is as a garden well supplied, and her springs and fructifying waters are beyond the reach of any exhausting power. There is a promise in Rev. iii, 10, which gives equal assurance of divine protection—"Be-

cause thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation." And again, "They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor sun smite them," Isaiah xlix, 10; agreeably to the blessed testimony so exhilarating to the saints, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber. The Lord is thy keeper." Psalm cxxi, 3-5. These are engagements which lay a solid foundation in Christ Jesus for the expectation of faith, and on which that blessed engagement is everlastingly established, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn; this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." Isaiah liv, 17.

We will now inquire into the manner in which the Lord discharges his responsibility, as put in connection with the view we have already taken of the circumstances of the Lord's people, or of His favored garden. Let us call to mind what has been shown of the nature of the world in the midst of which this hallowed spot is placed; let us bear in our recollection that it is represented as a waste wilderness, and as inhabited by wild beasts of prey; and that the different descriptions of human and diabolical enmity against the saints are said to correspond with the various propensities of the savage tribe. This will

remind us of the nature of our danger as exposed to such assailants, and will open the way for contemplating the grace of the covenant in providing a Keeper, who will suitably address His defence to the particular evil which may call for His interposition. The wild boar out of the forest, seeking to lay waste or root up the vine, Psalm lxxx, 13, representing the fury of the prosecutor, shall meet a mighty and invincible opposer in the Lord Jesus Christ. As it respects the literal Israel, we have the direct promise of the covenant, that Jehovah will cause them that come of Jacob to take root. Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit; and the vine now desolated by furious oppressors, who are accomplishing the Lord's righteous judgments upon the people, will ere long stretch out her luxuriant branches and bear the wholesome fruit. Isaiah xxvii, 6.

In the Christian Church the omnipotent defence of the Lord has been ever displayed; although trials and desolating oppressions have arisen against her, she lives to the praise of her heavenly Keeper! The fury of the prosecutor has served to enlarge her borders, the stormy wind and tempest have but scattered the seed; the precious plants have thus been increased, taking root in lands where they have become nurturing means of advancing the cause; and in this respect the testimony of old has been again

fulfilled, "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." Ex. i, 12. This is equally true of every individual believer. These private gardens of the Lord are the objects of His complacent regard; and He who has introduced the supernatural plants therein will assuredly preserve them. Our own experience may be appealed to in confirmation of this. Let us look to the days of persecution we have suffered: let us examine the effects produced by calumny, scorn, resistance, etc., and say if they have not been salutary, tending to confound the enemy, and to satisfy us that no wild beast shall be permitted to *do us harm*. The secret purposes of our Lord shall be accomplished even through the fierceness of man; and the blessed dispositions of heavenly-mindedness, simplicity, and faith, be strengthened within us by the means of persecution. This is evident from history, experience, and the divine record. Psalm cxl, 4-7; xii, 4-7.

The ravening wolf, representative of the false teachers who come in sheep's clothing, shall meet the same overthrow. Never let us forget the blessed testimony which our Lord has given respecting this evil, that although they shall come in subtlety, so that, were it possible, they would deceive the very elect, they shall never prevail. Matt. xxiv, 23-26. Never let us lose sight of the truth that even these attempts are in the overruling hand of the Lord;

and that, so far from proving injurious to the garden, they shall promote its health. Is it not written, "There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest"? 1 Cor. xi, 19. Is not this sufficient to assure us of benefit through the subtle attempts of the heresiarch? and will not our judgment confirm our expectations? What has given occasion for the many powerful statements of truth? what has called out the many able contenders for the faith once delivered to the saints? and to what are we indebted for many of our own clear and established perceptions into truth? Have not the efforts of false teachers, the introduction of false tenets, and the apparent exposure of the Church, been made instrumental to these blessings? Yes, assuredly, in this sense we owe them much. But our debt is due to Him, who by His faithfulness and wisdom thus preserves His heritage, and, in His mighty operation upon their souls, makes them to "try the spirits, whether they are of God," 1 John iv, 1; and commends them for so doing: "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." Rev. ii, 2.

The crafty fox shall not prevail: even those more unobserved evils which, on account of their apparent harmlessness, are less suspected or feared, shall be disclosed and detected, so as to awaken the soul to

its true life and demonstrate Jesus' care. This is effected by that blessed gift from the Holy Ghost, which we may in this subordinate sense distinguish by "discerning of spirits," possessed by the Apostle in its highest intention, but perpetuated to the Church in her members so far as belongs to spiritual apprehension of what is truth. We may call it an *instinctive perception*; for we discover it in instances where there is little ability to argue, little mental energy by which to detect what is false, and little capacity to discriminate by orderly discussion. It answers to what our Lord declares of His sheep, "A stranger will they not follow," "for they know not the voice of strangers." John x, 5. An unction from the Holy One rests upon them; they experimentally know Him that is true, and they are *in* Him that is true; hence they possess a certain spiritual appetite, by which they feed on wholesome food as *palatable*, but instinctively turn from and reject what is spurious. 1 John ii, 18-20; v, 20.

These are accompaniments of Jesus' watchful discharge of His own responsibility, and He will, in this character and office to His Church, preserve all her members, defend all His own property, repel every beast of prey, and break the teeth of the young lions. Psalm lviii, 6; Rom. xvi, 20.

That Christ is equally engaged by relation and promise to protect His garden from every noxious

weed, and to promote the plants of grace by every act of fostering care or discipline, is a covenant truth established on the same ground. His purpose is to extend His interposing presence to *every* necessity. It is not against this or that particular enemy that He promises to defend; but, “Lest *any* hurt it, I will keep it *night and day.*” Isaiah xxvii, 3. Therefore, we are enlivened by the assurance that none of those evils which spring up from the soil, or belong more peculiarly to the interior of the garden, shall be allowed to prevail. For this end He adopts the means of discipline, for it is thus that weeds are killed, or checked in their growth. Thus He makes use of the experience which we obtain in conflict, for the purpose of delivering us from the native tendency to indolence, presumption and independence; and, by disappointments and mortifications in the creature, directs an antidote to those earthly affections, which are like the weeds that entwine around and injure the precious flowers which adorn our garden. How powerfully has our heavenly Keeper shown us this His method of grace toward those whom He is preparing for glory. Have we not experienced the operation and found the need and the efficacy of such discipline? After some progress in the heavenly life, we usually become acquainted with the necessity that exists for vigor and abasement, through the various and painful ways which cause

us to feel and bewail our utter impotency. And who among us does not know that, in order to cure us of creaturely affections and adherence to earth, there is found a positive need of the most painful experience of human instability and insufficiency? These exercises, however, would not minister death to the weeds, neither would they produce any benefit to the plants, were not the divine power of the Lord in the midst of the conflict, and His covenant design to bless directed to this end. He, therefore, is the Keeper, and by Him the soul is cleansed, and the plants preserved. There is likewise a requisite attention to be given to the plants themselves. These, however pure and perfect in the seed or principle, are not so in *development*, but as they progressively advance to their state of maturity. There is a need to train, to prune, and to minister to them, as our Lord declares, "Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." John xv, 2. It is the part of the heavenly Planter thus to advance the health of the trees, and to pour forth invigorating operations upon faith, and fear, and hope, and love, and peace, and every grace. This is expressed in the Scriptures by the language of the saints, who, as taught of God, utter their fervent dependence upon the Saviour for the advancement of their sacred life. Thus it is the ardent desire of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith!" It is the

supplication of the Psalmist, “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.” Psalm xix, 13. The confidence of the believer is, that his hope is made to abound by the Holy Ghost, that for his love he has an inexhaustible source, since all his fresh springs are in the Lord, and that it is He who will keep the soul in perfect peace when it is stayed upon Him! Thus the inward work of grace corresponds in its expression with the relation Christ bears to His people, and gives a further attestation of the blessed truth that He is our Keeper.

The garden of the Lord must also be visited with such supplies as answer to the need of herbage, flowers, and fruits. These we know must receive showers and dews, winds and zephyrs, light and sunbeams, and shade; since to this combination they owe their color, fragrancy, freshness, and all the variety of loveliness which renders them an ornament to the earth, and a blessing to man. Just thus it must be within the spiritual garden we now contemplate. And behold the plenteous supply: “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass.” Psalm lxxii, 6. “I will be as the dew unto Israel.” Hos. xiv, 5. “I will pour water upon Him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.” Isa. xliv, 3. It “shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” John iv, 14. “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow

upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." "I am come into my garden." Cant. iv, 16; v, 1. "I am come a light into the world." John xii, 46. He shall rise "the Sun of Righteousness." Mal. iv, 2. "The Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud." "There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat." Isa. iv, 5, 6. Agreeing with the exalting testimony, "The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand: the sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul." Psalm cxxi, 5-7.

These are the results of that covenant keeping which belongs to the Lord's inheritance, His garden, His property! On this blissful privilege our faith should vigorously lay hold, believing that it shall be ours in Christ Jesus. The dispensation is extended to us variously; sometimes *immediately* from Himself, by visits that gladden and assure the soul, and at other times through the instituted means by which He promises refreshment to His people. One visit from Jesus, set home by the Holy Ghost to the affections of the heart, contains in it every part of the blissful provisions, for He is in Himself the rain, the dew, etc., and where He dwells in manifestation of the soul, there will be bloom and beauty within. But in the means of grace we find the sure refresh-

ment also, according to the promise, for it is *Jesus'* word, which comes down like the rain. Isa. lv, 10. It is His doctrine that distills like the dew. Deut. xxxii, 2. And although Paul may plant and Apollos may water, it is *God* that giveth the increase. 1 Cor. iii, 6.

Our part should be to seek the blessed union of all the privileged states of the believer, which has been the subject of investigation in the last few portions, that we may by the Spirit's witness find ourselves numbered with *gardens of the Lord*, and as such, beautified by the rich variety of supernatural productions which adorn these His dwelling places; that, as conscious of our responsibility, we *keep* the garden, watching thereunto with all perseverance; and that, as sensible of our own insufficiency, we look with simple affiance to Him who is the omnipotent and faithful defence of His own work. In this spirit we should be enabled to apprehend the divine word as our own, and know ourselves to be interested in its testimony, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Ps. xxxiv, 8. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither." Psalm i, 3. And with responsive praise we shall speak His glory; and notwithstanding that we are encompassed by enemies, our boast shall be, "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth

my hands to war and my fingers to fight." Psalm cxliv, 1. Enemies shall fall backward from our souls, as confounded by our Lord. And beauteous plants shall thrive and decorate our souls as habitations for our God.

THE REST OF THE HEART IN AN ALL-SUFFICIENT LORD.

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.—PHILIPPIANS iv, 7.

IN connection with that favored experience of the believer, to which we have been conducted in our late course of subjects, there stands a point of great and interesting moment which it is our part to consider, as intimately belonging to a ripening and matured degree of faith. We have seen how, by a conscious union with Christ, the soul is introduced into a state of visible beauty, comparable to a lovely and well-cultivated garden; and that the precious productions of the Holy Spirit are not only the subjects of faithful vigilance on the part of a Christian, but of divine preservation on the part of the Saviour. But high and excellent as is this blessed condition, it does not insure the positive possession of a state of conscious *bliss*: and as it is the privilege of the believer to enter fully into what we may style *blissful enjoyment* in the Lord, we should direct our attention to this part of experience.

Reflection will convince us that spiritual enjoy-

ment does not consist *merely* of spiritual *increase*. There may be visibly to the eye of beholders a beautiful consistency of character exhibited by the Christian, whilst the individual's soul is far from being in a joyous state. We have many examples recorded in the Scriptures of eminent saints, who, notwithstanding their holy and suffering course in following the Lord, have uttered the language of complaint, mourning, and woe! Similar instances occur under our immediate observation, serving to convince us, that even where there is no apparent provocation or inconsistency in the life, there is the absence of high or habitual rejoicing. Neither does this arise from any *secret* inconsistency. The believer may possess the clearest witness in himself of an upright mind ; he is unconscious of any allowed provocation ; whatever he discovers to be displeasing to his Lord, he promptly resists ; and in whatever instance he perceives a requirement in which God's mind is to be fulfilled, he immediately presses toward the mark. If He seems to say, make a sacrifice, the sacrifice is made. If He say, embrace a responsibility, the responsibility is embraced. Nevertheless, he is not in a state of exhilaration : his bosom does not glow with conscious delight. This is not, in the case we are contemplating, the result of distrust. He has just views of the divine nature, and knows that everlasting faithfulness will be glori-

fied in preserving the work of its own grace. He cannot hesitate as to his own participation of the Spirit's grace, for affections such as live in his breast could be produced by none but the Lord. He, therefore, believes that he shall never perish, and is able to exercise a quiet, calm, and pure affiance upon the covenant love of the Lord. Yet he is not *joyful*. A certain mournfulness, sometimes bordering upon sadness, pervades his soul. And although he *believes*, he cannot rise to the high sounds of spiritual exultation, nor tune his harp to tones of rapture and delight. Our own experience will probably confirm this statement, and demonstrate that the possession of positive enjoyment is a privilege distinct from the possession of consistency, or even of *affiance* itself. What, then, is it which is necessary for the degree of enjoyment which we have declared to be a privilege properly belonging to the life of faith? It is not a sense of *union*, for this is not doubted. It is not a persuasion of the Lord's faithfulness, this is not questioned. It is not an assurance of being preserved unto the end; this is sure, as a necessary consequence of being one with Christ. It is not a witness of integrity, which, even in the midst of conscious unworthiness, is undeniably wrought by the Holy Ghost. Have we never observed, in respect of the natural figures which are assumed to represent the advanced believer, that there is a necessity of

having *glowing sunbeams* upon the garden? In order to give an *exhilarating* influence upon our spirits, we require the cheering ray. Just so is the state of the inner man, and by this figure we may understand what is needed. Graces and sweet experience may abound within us, and yield a proportion of precious rest, yet there is something more than these requisite: and the truth is, that direct and lively manifestations of the presence of Jesus must be possessed, if we have *high enjoyment*. The language of the heart is—Let me hear Thy voice—let me see Thy smile: bound not my pleasures by mere *evidence*, that Thou hast been, art, or will be in the abode, but give me immediate *manifestation* of Thyself.

It may be interesting and instructive to examine the *manner* in which the desire is gratified; and as it involves much of the responsibility which rests upon the believer himself, it becomes a subject of increased importance. In order to preserve a close connection between this and the last subject, we may prosecute an inquiry through the same figures as have been so prominently before us; and as we have contemplated the believer's soul under the emblem of a garden stored with precious plants, continue our inspection of this favored spot, with the purpose of inquiry, whether the beauties we have there discovered are the only or the chief ornaments of the spot. An acquaintance with the Bible will immediately show

us, that, precious as are the fruits of the new creation, there is an excellency which exceeds in glory even a human holiness, possessed by Christ Jesus, which, as it never experienced the marring power of sin, so it never required the new creating grace of the Spirit. This Holy One is presented before us in the Scriptures, under several figures borrowed from nature. Thus in John xv, 1, it is written, "I am the true vine;" in Hos. xiv, 8: "I am like a green fir tree; in Cant. ii, 3: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons;" in Cant. ii, 1: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys;" and in Rev. xxii, 2, in the midst of the spiritual city, was there the tree of life. These are figures by which the Holy Spirit represents that intimate association which subsists between Christ and His people, and the nature of those communications from Him to the soul, by which the highest delights may be secured.

In the first place, the grace of Jesus, as condescending to this association, is to be considered, for in Him we possess a precious plant, brought as it were from the highest region, an exotic, to grow in our earth as a peculiar production, with which no native of the soil can compare. Very man as He did become for us, He never lost that peculiarity which is ascribed to Him as "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," Heb. vii, 26; yet in this

character he condescended to grow up before the Father as a tender plant, Isa. liii, 2; and in respect of his lineal descent from David, said to come forth as a branch from the root. Isa. xi, 1. He did so, that He might communicate the unspeakable blessings of salvation, and so assume our nature as to establish a lasting union between God and man; not only as existing in His own Person as the Christ, but as bestowed upon the redeemed in a mystical union with Himself. Thus it is written, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” Heb. ii, 14. “The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth;” and “of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.” So that by this unspeakable condescension we, who were ignorant of God, have Him declared unto us; and we, who were alienated from God, are reinstated in loving participation of Him: see John i, 14–16; 2 Peter i. 4.

It is in this sense that we are privileged to realize the peculiar blessings before us, even the intimate and close association of our soul with Him; and that, whilst looking to our own bosom as the garden of the Lord, we behold not only the plants which describe our own state of grace, but that Plant of renown, in whose singular beauties and fragrance we see what surpasseth even the fairest conditions of the

sons of men : for “ he is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely !”

But Jesus is not only a *plant*: He is described by plants most serviceable and precious, as we have seen. And in order to delight and instruct our own souls, we should turn a minute and particular attention to the appellations which are given Him.

Considered as a *Vine*, we receive Him in the character of a full-bearing tree, producing all those benefits which secure the great salvation. In the tender and dependent nature of this plant, we have an affecting emblem of Jesus’ humiliation, and of His voluntary dependence upon the Father, as having made Himself man. But in the richly clustering grapes we have a shadow of those peculiar excellences which were displayed in His obedient life, and which were offered to the Father as acceptable works. The pleasure of the Lord prospered in His hand: and in Him as the anointed One He was always well pleased. Isaiah liii, 10; Matt. iii, 17. Let us remember, however, that Messiah descended and dwelt with men, and obeyed and honored the Father in a *relative* character and office for man; and that this was done not merely to produce an acceptable righteousness for the sinner, but that the vine and its clusters should be gathered, and cast into the wine-press. Very affecting is the divine testimony on this part of Jesus’ grace. As believers, we know

that transgression called for judgment, and that judgment must necessarily receive its commission from a holy and true God: that escape there can be none, save only as the sentence is inflicted on Him who came to be the sinner's friend, and to glorify the Father. Hence we are led to the view of our blessed Lord as yielding Himself up to be gathered by the hand of judgment, and as bruised under the weight of our imputed guilt. Thus it is written, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him;" and again, "He was bruised for our iniquities." Isaiah liii, 10, 5. It is by this offering of Himself that Jesus has opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness. It stands as it were in the midst of the garden, perpetually supplied by the bruised vine, and composed of a wondrous and efficacious remedy for every woe: for this is He who came by water and by blood. 1 John v, 6. Not only was He consecrated in His own person by the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and the shedding forth of His blood, but He has established an abiding antidote to sin in all His blood-bought people, through the efficacy of the sanctifying Spirit, and the washing of His own atoning blood. Neither are these the only blessings flowing to us through the living vine; from His bruised clusters a cordial wine is produced, not only availing to heal the wounds which sin has made, but to cheer the desponding, to sustain the exhausted, and to animate

the believing! This was a benefit shadowed forth in the sacrifices of the law over which wine was poured forth, and referred to in Judges ix, 13, where wine is said to make glad the heart of *God* and *man*. God rejoiceth in the joy of His people: and saints, when appropriating redeeming love, are declared to rejoice and make a noise as through wine. Zech. ix, 15, 17; Isaiah xxv, 6.

But He stands in the garden as the overshadowing apple-tree, spreading its boughs abroad, and exhibiting the refreshing fruit which is to comfort and refresh the weary. Under this shade the soul is invited to sit down, and from these branches it is privileged to pluck and eat. Here the rich grace of Jesus is unfolded, and pardon, justification, peace, and every other fruit of redemption, are freely proffered. Let us observe the excellent quality of this fruit, and understand its healing virtues. The covenant blessing is this, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jer. xxxi, 34. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii, 1. "My peace I give unto you." John xiv, 27.

Let us continue our contemplation of the character of our Lord, and behold Him as the lily or the rose. In natural productions we know that there are none more lovely or fragrant than these, and that we cultivate them as among the chief ornaments to our

grounds. But who can sufficiently express the loveliness or fragrance of Him whom the Holy Ghost thus sets forth? In His innocence, modesty, and humility, He sheds a perfume in the region where He grows: and in His glowing character of love, as mingling Himself among the various plants of which our hearts are by grace made productive, He gives an unspeakable beauty, and forms the most attractive object. And this is not all; for, like the rose, He perpetuates His sweetness: and as the leaves of the flower are gathered to perfume our houses or our dress, so He, as a rose that has been gathered, gives forth a precious fragrancy which serves to impregnate the Christian life with its sweetness. What is so sweet as a *crucified* Lord? In this offering He was a sweet savor unto God: and as thus exhibited to faith, He is the dearest possession of the heart. Eph. v, 2; Gal. iii, 1; Rev. v, 6-9.

By combining all these characters, as set forth in the several appellations we have considered, we come to the view of our Lord as the *Tree of Life*: a title which comprises in it all that faith can desire. It carries us back to the first Eden, wherein the sacramental pledge was seen and possessed by Adam. It was free and open of access, as a sign and pledge of present and future blessings in store for man, dependent on his obedience. The obedience was broken, and the pledge was withdrawn. The unsheathed

sword was displayed, and, turning every way to keep the way of the tree of life, proclaimed the awful prohibition and forfeiture ! The life thus lost to the sinner is restored in a second Adam ; and in Jesus we behold, not a type or shadow, but the substance of spiritual eternal life given back to man. He stands in the midst of the Church, in the midst of the renewed heart, as the abiding life and source of life to His people. His boughs afford perpetual fruit. No winter seasons, no exhaustion of the productions, can be known by Him ; He yieldeth his fruit every month ; and the leaves of this tree are for the healing of the nations. Rev. xxii, 2.

Let us not say that, interesting as the view of Jesus may be, in respect of His grace and glory, it seems little connected with the subject of the believer's *enjoyment*. It is true all these privileges are the believer's in whatever *frame* of mind he may embrace them, but they are privileges which afford not only the quiet repose of faith, but which yield the supply of *bliss*, and it is from Jesus, as apprehended *powerfully*, and as revealed manifestly in those characters, that the peculiar enjoyment we are to seek is given. Let us, therefore, understand that the possession of such a part of Christian experience belongs not so much to the habitual life of faith, as to the particular *acts* of faith. And that our faith must be called forth into these special expressions, not

resting in a general sense of the fullness of Jesus, but taking out of that fullness by diligent application to the several parts of His work thus revealed. For example, we feel experimentally, that if we desire a *blissful* assurance from the condescension of Christ, it is by means of entering into Him, or entwining ourselves around Him as our incarnate God; *enjoyment* is possessed in proportion to the liveliness with which we can say He is my brother, my friend, I lean upon His arm, I trust Him with all my case, I see Him my ever present and my sympathizing associate. In order to positive enjoyment we must be *in the act* of contemplating His richly redeeming love, and of plunging into the fountain which is opened in His blood. Our bliss is found in feeling that the blood of Jesus is as it were fresh-sprinkled upon the heart. It is true we possess peace in this atonement, and the benefits of full remission when we come to Christ; but we find, as we advance on our way, that the recollection of even *pardoned* guilt produces present pain, and that the sense of continued vileness and defilement forms a burden upon the breast. Nothing can remove or assuage this, but renewed application of the same blood as did at first bring us peace; and therefore, if we would live in spiritual *enjoyment*, we must come again and again by *acts* of faith. It is not enough that we have *once* drank of the wine of the cup; enough, indeed, it is to be a sure

pledge of final blessedness; but ere we reach the eternal rest, we have to encounter many a wearisome fainting and fatigue of soul, which, were it not for the *cordial*, would sink us to the earth. Our enjoyment is found in bringing the cup again to our parched lips, and in renewing our taste of the revivings of salvation as drawn from a crucified Lord. It is a blessed privilege to know that the apple tree is in the garden, and that its boughs bear their fruit for our souls! But do we not know that *bliss* is dependent upon the positive use of the blessing? We must *sit down* under its shadow, we must pluck off the apple, we must eat it and find it sweet to our taste, otherwise the high consolations of faith will not be ours. Thus the spouse is represented as longing for such *intimate and realizing* acts. “Comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.” Cant. ii, 5. It is not enough that the rose and the lily adorn the garden, we must *gather* them and apply their sweetness. It is by drawing closely to our crucified Lord, by investigation of His innocence and bleeding love, by intense contemplation of His grace, and by holding Him firmly and nearly to our breast, that we experience that rich impregnating sweetness which imparts a *joyous* persuasion of Christ’s love. By similar acts of faith we must appropriate the blissful truths contained in the relation which Jesus bears to the soul as the tree of life. We must not only

contemplate the blessings with admiration, but we must call forth a lively sense of their value as displayed by the spiritual Eden He has produced within the heart, and in glowing anticipation of the paradise that is above. There the fullness of the redeemed inheritance is laid up for the ransomed of the Lord, and these are privileged to rejoice in the promise, “to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” Rev. ii, 7.

Thus we perceive that there is a high and peculiar state of spiritual bliss into which advanced Christians are introduced even on this side eternity. It is manifestly a desirable possession, and it is evident it is attained through special acts of faith. Our own responsibility, therefore, stands conspicuously before us, for as we perceive that enjoyment is in a sober, rational, and believing state of soul, maintained by lively acceptance of revelation, we become chargeable with great and reprehensible negligence of privilege if we are not resolutely seeking it. We should, therefore, look into the present state of our hearts with holy solicitude, to urge them upon activity, and to determine whether we are in possession of the blessedness described.

If we have this spiritual enjoyment, our attention must be given to cherish it diligently, and to seek the continuance of spiritual simplicity; so that we

may not lower the standard of our own experience, nor in any measure admit into our feelings a corrupt and selfish mixture. Let us remember, at all times, that although we may derive comfort from the plants of the *new creation*, rejoicing to behold our hearts made the garden of the Lord, we must consider these but evidences of His work, who is *in Himself* the true, pure, and unmixed source of holy joy; and in every sweet excitement of bliss we feel, it should be our earnest endeavor to ascertain that we possess it as drawn out of the broken and loving heart of Him, who gives us all our joys through His pains. If we are destitute of this joy, it is our duty to inquire wherefore we are not so privileged as others are. It may be that there is some evil in us, that we do not sufficiently mortify and resist: if so, we should at once encounter it, and offer it as a sacrifice to the Lord. If our sadness originates from such a cause, remove the cause, and the sadness will also depart. But possibly it may proceed from the Lord's vigilant care to *prevent* an evil to which we are disposed. Some persons, whilst abhorring their *guilty* self, are inclined to fall in love with their *sanctification*; and are so determined upon ascribing their enjoyment to the plants which belong to their own state of grace, that they turn not aside to contemplate the more excellent "Plant of Renown." If this be the case, it would be unsuitable to allow the soul to find

gratification, and, therefore, it is sad. Turn, then, for a while, even from the work of grace, that Jesus Christ alone may be beheld, and endeavor to take Him in the blessed characters He fulfills for His people freely and simply as He is given to the soul. Whilst delighting in the life and labor of love, we must advance in spiritual discernment into the revelation of Jesus, that it may be our joy to be complete in Him. This is what belongs to an advanced state of experience belonging to a renewed heart; it consists with increased sense of personal demerit, and is instrumental to promote real excellence.

THE HEART'S CHARITY.

"Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."—JOHN xvii, 20–23.

A SOUL advanced into the possession of those spiritual enjoyments which we last investigated, is prepared for the exercise of many dispositions which are of a relative kind, and which can only be demonstrated by such as are in the intimate fellowship of the Spirit; they are the peculiar affections of the faithful toward their fellow-members and their fellow-men, and are in action proportionably to the individual influence of the mind of Jesus, which they experience in their own souls. The Lord has great designs also in rendering His people relatively a blessing; He hereby exhibits the lovely productions of holiness and peace, so as to justify His own work; and He puts His redeemed upon the manifestation of disinterested and liberal feeling, so that their new life is called

forth into vigorous exertion. Were it not thus, the evil of selfishness might still hide itself even under the appearance of that which is lovely, or might act as a canker worm to the fruits which we produce. There is no reproach which we have greater reason to deprecate than that which was spoken against Israel. He “is an empty vine, he bringeth forth *fruit unto himself.*” Hosea x, 1. And when we are in the possession of conscious personal interest in the Lord, we shall do well to be upon our guard, lest we should in any degree evince indifference to the interests and enjoyment of others. Wherever the work of the Holy Ghost exists, there will be the precious productions which furnish the believer for the display of every part of the Christian life, and *zeal* and *love* will have the conspicuous place in the regenerate heart. These will produce their own genuine effects, and by this means there will be a beautiful agreement between the character of Jesus, as considered in the preceding subject, and that of the souls imbued with His spirit: so that what we have seen of our Lord, as condescending to become our brother, and as such to be to us a fruit-bearing, overshadowing, fragrant, sustaining blessing, will, in measure, be answered in the life of the saint.

In the *condescension* of Jesus, there was, indeed, and is, an unspeakable grace, never to be fully comprehended, or exhibited by the creature. His was

the stooping of *godhead* to miserable man, and this by a voluntary assumption of our nature under circumstances of deep humiliation. He, “being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” Phil. ii, 6; yet he made Himself of no reputation, and humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant, and being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Phil. ii, 7, 8. This was an act which must ever remain unfathomable in mercy and grace, the admiration and wonder of angels. Yet, whilst we give glory to Him as the exalted Head, we must not be ignorant of the likeness subsisting, even in this respect, between Him and His members. In the passage referred to, the Apostle introduces the recollection of this grace in the Saviour, with a *practical* intention. His exhortation stands in connection with it, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Phil. ii, 5. So that it is rendered undeniably, that the Christian is required to exercise a mind full of condescension, kindness, piety, forbearance, and tender charities, as it is written, “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor, for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.” Rom.xv, 1-3.

But it may be said, how is it that a redeemed sinner

can be described as *condescending* to man? He is Himself partaker of human nature by natural descent from Adam, and He has also, notwithstanding His privilege in redemption, a participation in the entailed curse and sin belonging to fallen nature: He cannot, therefore, be supposed as *stooping* below Himself, even in any case to which He may direct His interest, or sympathy! This is true. Yet it does not interfere with the propriety of the exhortation, that we should *descend*. Children of God are by conversion put into possession of a new nature. In their new principle, or new creation, they possess likeness with their Lord. And as He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners in His immaculate humanity, so the saint's *new principle* of life may be thus characterized. It is holy, being the pure, incorruptible seed. 1 Peter i, 22, 23. It is harmless, having the lamb-like disposition of love and peace. Matt. x, 16. It is undefiled, for the followers of the lamb keep their garments, and are without guile before Him. Rev. xiv, 5. It is separate from sinners, for the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty hear the divine voice which calls them forth from the world, and they come out and are separate. 2 Cor. vi, 17, 18. Neither is there any disposition more conspicuously evinced by the disciples, than their dread of being found of the world. Thus David supplicates,

“Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men,” etc. Ps. xxvi, 9–11. Nevertheless, the spirit is kept in conscious lowliness, and in unfeigned charity. It is not a separation produced by self-importance, or maintained in self-conceit. Having an experimental knowledge of God’s dealings, who is good, and merciful, and, therefore, teacheth sinners in the way (Ps. xxv, 8), he desires to reflect the same image; he also would mingle mercy with his goodness; and having felt what it is to be a sinner, and known the blessedness of passing from this state of death, he has a heart which zealously and affectionately seeks to persuade men, and pluck them from the fire. 2 Cor. v, 11; Jude 23. But this disposition is not only in action toward the wanderer: it lives in perpetual readiness toward the professing body, and to every member thereof will extend tender forbearance and sympathy. There are many upright souls in the Church of Christ, who will call upon the affections. They are possibly weak in knowledge, experience, and faith: they are liable to many sorrows, temptations, and assaults, and are frequently burdened with infirmity, and impeded by trials. Toward these the Scripture has enjoined the more advanced to exercise correspondent feelings—“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou

also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Gal. vi, 2. "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." 1 Thess. v, 14. These are affections which, according to the example of the Apostle, must be in exercise, with that kind of sympathy which renders the experience of the tried one near and important, even as if it were our own. "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" 2 Cor. xi, 29.

Impartiality being one of the greatest requisites in the life of genuine charity, and consequently wrought in the regenerate by the Holy Spirit, we shall discover it in proportion to the advance of the soul, abundant in *universal condescension*. It does not depart from its own high protection, but it stands with open arms to invite all to participate in its joys. It does not allow of any depression of the search after knowledge, but it is ready to enter into the experience of the most infantine in the Church of Christ, and in this mind lives, speaks, and acts as his Master did, according to the measure which a disciple may obtain. It is necessary to admit this consideration with some serious attention, for if we are defective in the spirit, we shall awfully err against the Christian standard. We are commanded to "*condescend to men of low estate*," Rom. xii, 16; a precept

which is followed by these words, “Be not *wise* in your own conceits.” This seems to affix the true meaning to the passage, and to show us that a *low estate, intellectually* demonstrated, is the condition we are thus to receive under our sympathy ; our own observation will convince us of the many who live in the *service* of Jesus, who are very deficient in point of judgment or knowledge. Some have had little advantage for furthering such attainments ; others are not talented equally with those who have more enlarged capacities : some are beginners in the way, and some are so illiterate, that upon the most common concerns they have difficulty in conveying their meaning by words. In such instances, the more cultivated and advanced may be inclined to feel, and betray not only surprise, but impatience and rash judgment, and so may fall into the snare of discomposing and troubling the upright, and of committing a trespass against the spirit of humility and love. Here, therefore, *condescension* must be in exercise, teaching us kindly, and judiciously, and patiently, to bear with what is homely, and to penetrate through the obscurity of erroneous *terms* into the *intention* and feeling of the person. To this low estate Jesus did, and does condescend ; He will not quench the smoking flax ; He will carry the lambs in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young : and the disciple is bound to emulate likeness to his Master.

But we will not limit our view of condescension to the low estate which respects profession or intellect. They who fill the low estate of the poor of this world are among the number of such as we must unfeignedly condescend unto. Difference of station in life belongs to the divine government, and is necessary for wise ends; but it does not place any real difference between man and man as the creatures of God. "He hath made of one blood all nations," Acts xvii, 26, and we all alike descend from Adam as our parent stock. The believer remembers this, and is exhorted to act upon it, not showing respect of persons (James ii, 1-5), as a part of his conformity to the Lord. 1 Peter i, 17. And if it be done in the spirit of Jesus, it will be *impartial*, not confined to the *very poor*, not done with visible sense of condescension, not limited to such as are more immediately connected with us, but universal, without prejudice, without hypocrisy, and without partiality.

Thus we perceive what is the general and habitual preparation of heart possessed by the believer toward a more special display of his likeness to Jesus, and how, having a *brother's* heart, he is ready, as the occasion may require, to evince the disposition of a brother.

As Jesus is pre-eminently the living or true *Vine*, His disciple will also in his degree exhibit a pre-

eminence of this description: he also will bear the clustering grape, and by the juice thereof make glad the heart of God and man. It is true he bears no *justifying*—no *atoning* fruit; but he bears *fruit*, and this is acceptable unto God; he receives the sweet savor as the effect of His own operative grace, and as coming up before him in Christ. 1 Thess. iv, 1; Heb. xiii, 16; Phil. iv, 18. Toward man his fruits are relatively gladness, joy, blessing. According to the Scripture account of God's children, the wilderness is glad for him: he strengthens the weak hands, and confirms the feeble knees, Isaiah xxxv, 3; he ministers the cup of salvation as God's instrument, presenting it to the lips of the parched and thirsty soul; and he passes on his way, intent upon strengthening the weary by the words of his mouth, and confirming them in their privileges by counsel and prayer. See Job xvi, 5; Acts xviii, 23. There are many living examples of this fact. We look upon innumerable guilty, sin-burdened souls, who have been encouraged to turn to the great salvation by the testimony which the matured believer has given, and upon many even of the vigorous and strong in faith, whose consolations and joy have been rendered more abundant by the Christian fellowship they have found in this fruit-bearing Vine. Rom. i, 12; xv, 32; 1 Cor. xvi, 18.

The wide-spreading and fruitful bough is also an

emblem of Jesus' disciple. The relative affections of the believer are constituted overshadowing blessings to pilgrims: they dwell under his shadow, and return, revive, grow, and give their fragrancy abroad. Hosea xiv, 7. They find in the advanced experience, and wise counsel, and sheltering kindness of such an one, blessed rest, and holy edification; and many a time, when ready to faint under persecution, calumny, affliction, conflict, they run as it were underneath these boughs, and they feel themselves stayed and comforted. Neither is it to the time of their sojourning here that these relative benefits are confined. Believers are comparable to the lily and the rose, Cant. ii, 1, giving sweetness where they dwell, and after their departure hence their fragrancy remains. In this they are conformed to their Lord. They are plucked, and gathered, and gone, but the savor of their conversation and example remains, so that being dead they yet speak. Heb. xi, 4. Their tongue is silent in the grave, and their spirits are with those who dwell on Mount Zion above; nevertheless, they are present still in the memory of those to whom they have ministered on earth, and in whom the benefit of their work of love still remains. The recollection of their zeal, devotion, charity, patience, faith, especially as evinced in their dying hours, sheds a refreshing influence on those who mourn their departure, and who press toward the same

mark: thus they are added to the cloud of witnesses who are encompassing the militant church. Heb. xii, 1, 2, 23.

These are spiritual excellences of a high and singular kind: and we as saints should labor to possess growing appreciation of them. They not only belong exclusively to such as are born again of the Spirit, but in their perfect development they belong to such as are *matured* in the faith. It is the very existence of Jehovah Himself *who is love—communicative* love! We behold our God in His own infinite perfection, which is essential in His own un-created and blessed nature, and we admire and adore: we behold Him as manifested in His dear Son, and thus bringing divine charity near unto man, a charity which by boundless free grace has dispensed life to the lost world, and embraced the wretched outcast with purposes of unsearchable love. We contemplate this act of grace with increased understanding of its glorious fullness, and we bless Him with the grateful tribute of that heart He has conquered for Himself. We feel also that he who dwelleth in God, dwelleth in love, not only as divine love is thus become His dwelling-place, but as he experiences its impregnating virtue and power diffusively giving itself through the inward man, and causing him in his measure to be *Love*. It is, therefore, an excellent, high, and supernatural existence! Alas,

by nature we are wholly of a contrary mind, hateful and hating one another, seeking our own, biting and devouring one another. Titus iii, 3; James iii; Gal. v, 15. Nor are we ever brought into the possession of charity until we are constrained by the love of Christ. 2 Cor. v, 14.

It is also necessary, even in believers, that this disposition be excited, prayed over and watched for. In us there is a corrupt fleshy law which wars against that which is spiritual ; there is a constant tendency to slothfulness and selfishness, which must be resolutely resisted ; and we should be so sensible of this as to live proportionably close to our Lord and in His Spirit. As assistant to our lively expression of this relative zeal, we should call in the recollection of our own individual experience. This will teach us with increased emotion to contemplate the time of our alienation from God, when we lived without Him in the world, were apostates and workers of evil, when the act of *sovereign grace* found, rescued, and saved us. It will teach us to feel the inconsistency of dealing out censures against others, and the wickedness of casting a stone against a fellow-sinner ; since mercy has prevailed for our own soul, we shall believe that it can prevail for the most abandoned. We contemplate—and our faith gathering fervor by such reflection, will be ready thus to embrace the poor sinner, bringing him before the

mercy-seat in our arms of charity; and saying, “Lord, since thy love has been magnified in me, O why shall it not be magnified in this poor soul.” See 1 Tim. i, 15. We should constantly reflect upon our own short-comings: see what it has cost us to reach the present standard; what conflict, what heart-breakings, what humiliation, what agony; and how after all, we are but unprofitable servants. This hasty fall will excite the grace of charity. We dare not hurl the stone of condemnation: it drops from our uplifted hand. We dare not rashly censure, or pass judgment upon our fellow-traveler; knowing by experience how much may be endured before God, to which no human eye is privy, we learn to hope, and pray, and forbear. John viii, 7; Luke xvii, 18; xxii, 32; Rom. vii, 18, 19. These helps will be found serviceable in furthering our own souls in the life of love. And we should habitually bear about with us the recollection of what the Lord has done, is doing, and must still do for us, if we attain the high places of the kingdom, and live to the glory of His redeeming name.

To this standard let us perpetually aim, and supplicate our Lord to sanctify all the steps we have trod—all the mercies and deliverances we have experienced—and all the spiritual enjoyments into which we are admitted; that they may lead us forth into the life of visible, impartial, experimental charity

here on earth, and number us with those blessed ones whose memory is made a blessing, and whose sweet savor in Christ is never lost in life or death ! O may the weary, the tried, the sorrowful; yea, the guilty also, find in us a tenderness which meets their every want, and which in the Spirit's power shall be blest in drying the mourner's tear, and in bringing the stranger home !

THE MATURED AND RIPENED EXPERIENCE OF THE HEART.

"For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."—**MARK** iv, 28, 29.

HAVING passed through the investigation of man's condition under several important periods of his probationary state, and conducted him in this view from his state of native apostasy, up to that of a matured experience in the heavenly life, it remains for us previously to quitting this interesting subject, to examine the season in which the saint may be considered ripe for that blessed exchange which he will make of time for eternity. It is the season wherein the Lord gathers His matured fruit, and takes it to Himself in the heavenly garner. Let the mind at this moment recall the stages through which we have passed. We have considered the sinner as apostate from God, as under conviction upon His judgment and natural feelings, as moved to a holy profession of return to God, as restless whilst with divided affections, and brought to decision by the release of

his will, as entering upon an upright warfare against sin, as experiencing personal impotency in the conflict, as abased and contrite, as pouring out his heart at the foot of the cross with a desire for union with Jesus, as taken into conscious union, as conscious henceforth of vigorous power unto holiness, as exhibiting visible beauty in the Christian life, as living in holy vigilance, as kept by the covenant power of God, as abounding in spiritual enjoyment, as living in lively affections of relative charity. We must remember that in all this experience is a progressive condition of excellence, and that it is all designed for the purpose of introducing the soul into its proper final existence, in that region of glory where faith will be succeeded by blissful vision, and where conflict will give place to everlasting peace !

In all creation there is a certain order observed by the Creator. None of His works on earth present us with any production that is *at once* perfect in maturity, or strength, or beauty. From the lowest to the most exalted of God's creatures in the vegetable or animal world, there is a progressive existence advancing to the perfection of its species or kind, and preserving a vast and wonderful distinction between the Almighty Worker and His work. Jehovah alone is infinitely perfect; in His own self-existent Being, possessing a perfection which admits of no gradation, or variation in quality or degree. He is

“the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever!”
Heb. xiii, 8.

It is interesting and important to observe how this order of progressive attainment is appointed, not only in the natural, but also in the spiritual world; and that the whole of the *new Creation* is thus arranged. Even in respect of Christ the living Head, we perceive that such is the divine will. In His assumption of human nature, He took it in all its infantine weaknesses, and “increased in wisdom and stature,” according to the prophecy which declared that he should *grow up*. Isaiah xi, 1. And be given as a *child*. Isaiah ix, 6. So also in respect of His covenant character, He is described as attaining to a certain perfection, or completion of the state requisite for its several parts. We read that it “became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation *perfect through suffering*.” Heb. ii, 10. And that “*being made perfect*, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.” Heb. v, 9. We should rightly understand these testimonies, otherwise we might fall into the error of supposing that our Lord possessed more fitness or provision for the sacrifice of Himself and His mediatorial government, at one period than another. Whereas Jesus was *always* God’s *Christ*. He was not more holy in one stage of His life than

another, but was from His conception “that Holy thing.” He was not possessed of the Holy Ghost with more fullness at one time than another, for the Spirit dwelt without measure in Him. In Him dwelt all fullness, yea, the fullness of the Godhead bodily, not only as He is the incarnate God, but as He ever possessed the fullness of the complacent presence of the Father and Spirit in His office character. Consequently He was always our Prophet, our Priest, and our King; as the history of His time of humiliation will sufficiently determine. Nevertheless, there was a giving forth, or development, of His Messiahship, according to the progressive light He came to diffuse amongst men, and belonging to the several stages through which He had to pass in accomplishing the conditions of salvation, and passing to His Mediatorial seat above; where He liveth the perfect captain and author of salvation, altogether such an one as answers the testimony of His grace, and the nature of His kingdom.

When directing our attention to Christ’s mystical body, the Church, we discover the same order; that is, a progression which belongs to the nature of the divine dispensation. The Church itself has a certain stature or measure unto which it is ordained to reach. This sublime interest is not left under the notion of uncertainty, or indecision, on the part of God, respecting its arrangement for time or eternity. Known

unto God are all His works from the beginning. By Him "the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Eph. iii, 15. And the whole shall be composed of individual members ordained to the final inheritance. Correspondently with this gospel revelation, is the type of which we read in Exod. xxv, 9, and which is interpreted in Heb. viii, 5; iii, 1-6. The tabernacle built by Moses was typical of Christ's mystical body, the Church. It was built after the pattern that was first exhibited to Moses in the Mount; and he was solemnly charged to adhere to this rule, and be faithful to his responsibility. So Christ buildeth His Church in covenant obedience, and according to the pattern of the everlasting purpose, and consequently addeth daily to the Church such as shall be saved. Acts ii, 47. It therefore *groweth up* into a holy temple, maketh *increase* by perpetual addition to its numbers; as also by continual advances in knowledge, charity, and visible holiness, according to what is written in Eph. iv, 12-16. This is called the *perfecting* of the body, that is, it is the maturing of its spiritual existence, and the rapid advance to that period when, the last stone being brought and cemented to the building, the scaffolding of this world will be removed, and the crowned Church appear perfect in her Lord.

It is by the same arrangement that individual believers are brought to their perfection; that is shown

by Eph. iv, 13, 14, and we meet with other passages in the word, which speak of saints as advancing from infancy to manhood, and so possessing a perfection in their life. Thus Paul exhorts, “ howbeit in malice, be ye children, but in understanding be *men*.” 1 Cor. xiv, 20.

We speak wisdom to them that are *perfect*. Milk for babes, strong meat for *men*. Let as many of you as be *perfect* be of the same mind. I count not myself as having attained, nor as though I were already *perfect*; see 1 Cor. ii, 6; Phil. iii, 12, 15. And so again it is said, that believers grow like the lily, and that they bring forth more fruit in their old age. Hosea xiv, 5; Psalm xcii, 12–15. Consequently we find that it is in accordance with the divine arrangement, that in spiritual life there is, “ first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” Mark iv, 28. It is requisite to be well-informed upon this point equally with those preceding. We talk of *growing in grace*, and it is with propriety we use the expression! At the same time we should determine what is meant by this phrase. It is not that we receive *new principles* as we advance. We received *the comprehensive principle once*, that is in regeneration. Regeneration is not a progressive, but an instantaneous act, giving life to the dead, in which blessing there is no gradation or difference of degree. And the principle of life is per-

fect—the incorruptible seed. Growth in grace, therefore, consists of the progressive development of this holy seed, under the nurturing operation of the Spirit, through the means. It is the same holy life as was at first given, but it is demonstrated in maturing beauty; and in this last stage is the perfection of the heavenly plant.

These considerations will assist us in our further inquiry as to the nature of this matured life: for it is proper to observe, that it is discoverable in the increased decision, and power of affection or experience *already* possessed, not of *new* dispositions which were hitherto not included in the work of grace. Thus, for instance, the ripened believer has in an early stage passed through deep conviction, and distressing discoveries of his own nature and heart. An increase of this conviction belongs to increasing grace; the difference lies in its *accompaniments*. Formerly it was productive of much distraction, or internal tumult, agitation, anguish, and assaults upon faith and hope: but now it is experienced in a mind so far self-reduced and mortified, as to receive the discovery in submissive abasement. There is a decrease of self-importance, of self-expectation, and a spiritual understanding of the necessity for laying the axe to the root of the tree. Hence, the believer will say with unfeigned lowliness, “*I must decrease!*” And perceives that he receives the sentence of death in

himself, that he should not trust in himself, but in God who raiseth the dead. 2 Cor. i, 9.

Another mark of growth in grace is, when the covenant method of salvation becomes increasingly precious, through the knowledge of our own vileness and unworthiness. Redemption in the blessed surety has been already appreciated and powerfully applied; nevertheless, increased experience will add a daily measure of love and gratitude to that we have exercised; and dependence upon the Lord Jesus will become proportionably simple. This the apostle calls growing up into him in all things who is the head, even Christ. Eph. iv, 15. And this answers to the testimony in Prov. iv, 18, the path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Pilgrimage is increasingly cheered by the effulgent beams which are given from the Sun of Righteousness, until in the meridian ray the spirit is ripened—complete—perfected—delivered from the miserable obstacles to peace, which arise out of self-seeking, and brought into the blessed possession of a pure or unmixed faith in the all-sufficient Saviour.

These are exercises which by no means interfere with the advancement of the soul in all visible holiness. The features of the new creature in Christ are always after the pattern of Him; and as the saint matures, his likeness to his Lord becomes more conspicuous; and if we may adopt the language, he is

more *manly*, more *energetic*, has more of *character in his face*. This is observable very particularly in the advance which is made in spiritual indifference to the world and weanedness from its joys and sorrows ; the soul possessing a sweet serenity and calmness, that deepens with time, combined, as we have shown, with unfeigned *love* of mankind, so that whilst by the strong impulse of love attracted heavenward the spirit perpetually bounds to the bosom of the Lord, so again by the strong impulse of charity yearning over the souls of men, it drops down again with loving willingness to abide in the flesh, if by any means it may be made instrumental to bless the world. It is evident that such were the fervent affections of the ripened Apostles previously to their final departure hence ; we, therefore, conclude that as in them, so in us, this disposition belongs to an advanced state of grace being produced through long experience, well disciplined feelings, and sanctified self-knowledge. See Phil. i, 23, 24 ; 2 Pet. i, 13, 15 ; 1 Cor. xiii ; 2 Thess. i, 3.

These blessed affections being brought to a state of maturity, we may say the gathering time is come ; or that should it please the Lord not immediately to take hence the soul, its *meetness* for the great event is conspicuous and clear. We may possibly in the course of this subject have had it suggested to us to inquire, whether we are to conclude that in all in-

stances when the soul is prepared for its departure it will immediately be taken away, so that the delay of this event is to be considered as a token of unmeetness, or of not being ripe! The most satisfactory reply to this question will be found by turning our attention to the several emblems used to represent the saints. Now we know that the *flower* will attain to its perfection, exhibit the full development of its beauties, its rich variety of glowing tints, its fragrance and vigor, and continue to stand in the garden; and, long ere it yields to decay, will refresh us with its loveliness. The fruit also that hangs ripe on the bough continues to present itself to the eye in its mellowed maturity, long before the hand is put forth to sever it from the branch on which it grows. And the corn, even when reaped by the sickle, is suffered to stand in the open field ere it be taken home to the garner, and is many times contemplated by the passenger on his way, or by the owner of the crop. Just so is it with ripened souls; they may be standing complete in Him. Col. iv, 12. And in experience be ready to depart, 2 Tim. iv, 6, 7: nevertheless, they may not yet be gathered. The Lord has infinitely wise reasons for this delay. He will not hastily take away what is calculated to reflect so much glory to Him in the Church and in the world. It is good to lend the ripened soul awhile to this region of sin and woe, that so others may derive

a parting blessing from this their advancement, and the Author of their excellence be glorified. And in respect of the dying, who being ready to drop are yet held by some slender tie which still detains them in the *vale* below or on their dying bed, it is frequently the occasion of much honor and praise to the Lord, by affording an opportunity for the saint to manifest the triumphs of faith, and the perfection of patience. These reasons are sufficient to satisfy us of the wisdom of the Lord herein : and we know not what additional blessings are hereby given into the soul of the believer himself, or what *more abundant* entrance into the heavenly kingdom may by this means be provided for him. This should afford us much comfort in those instances wherein we witness the apparently painful lingerings of departing spirits, who struggle with the sufferings of dying nature. If they are ripe for their eternal rest, God is thus *showing* that they are in their abiding affiance through the awful struggle. And to ourselves in the prospect of dying, or in the endurance of the pains of death, it should be a consolatory reflection, that we are leaving a last blessing upon those who behold us ; and that like the orb of light, that is about to leave the inhabitants on whom it has shone in the comparative shades of night, we set in glory, and leave as it were our lingering rays to illumine the horizon. We may also take comfort respecting the

question whether it be possible for redeemed souls to be taken away *before* they are ripe? This we cannot imagine, for our God regulates all His ways by an unerring rule of wisdom, both as it respects Himself and His people. That there are different *measures* of blessedness, holiness, and visible excellence, is undeniable: and that we are bound, as responsible creatures, to press after the highest measure, is quite clear from the Scripture. See 2 Peter i, 11. At the same time we are sure that the Lord will never cut off His fruit in an unripe state, or before it is prepared to be laid up incorruptible and excellent in the future kingdom. We must take the consolation which the everlasting covenant in Christ ensures on this ground, seeing that all His redeemed are *preserved* in Him, and use it with believing industry, being solicitous to prove that we are preserved unto a *high* state of perfection, and consequent abundance in glory. At whatever period, however, the visitation may come, wherein we are received to rest, we are assured that it shall be attended with a glorious display of covenant faithfulness. Here let us call to mind that there is a mutual interest in the property—Christ and His people being *sharers* in the possession; for the soul that is blood-bought is not only the *believer's soul*, but *Jesus' inheritance*: hence Jesus will have a peculiar care of it in that important moment when it is about to pass the valley of the shadow of

death : He considers this the period when *He* shall receive of the travail of His soul, when *He* shall gather the reward of His suffering work, and be joyful in the perfection of His own heritage as the Lamb. Therefore, it is said, “ Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” Psalm cxvi, 15. He has now to fulfill His own promise, of which not only Apostles, but all who believe, are heirs, “ I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there you may be also.” John xiv, 1–3. It is now that He is engaged to give evidence of His covenant character and victory, of which He spake to the Apostle John : “ I am the Alpha and Omega.” “ I am he that liveth and was dead,” “ and have the *keys* of hell and of death.” Rev. i, 18. By these keys, that is by His legal authority and rule, He opens and no man shuts, shuts and no man opens ; and in reference to this last moment displays His own wisdom, opening the prison-house of clay in the best moment to let out the prisoner ; opening the realms of glory to let it in to its eternal mansion, and shutting the bottomless abyss, so that no yawning gulf shall affright or endanger the liberated spirit as it enters on its rapid flight to glory. Thus the covenant has provided *security* for the saints, and caused it to be written that *death* is theirs. 1 Cor. iii, 22. The time of departure is also a pecu-

liar time of power and grace of the Holy Ghost, who in His office as witness and comforter puts forth His omnipotence to sustain and cheer the departing. It is by Him that Jesus' victory over death and the grave is applied with power, and appropriated to the drying of the tears of sorrow, and the hushing of every alarm or fear. It is by Him that the spirit is refreshed in the consciousness of having already experienced His regenerating and faithful grace, and by the present mighty application of these truths, that the bed of sickness is *made*, according to promise; and the dying pillow is softened and made a place of holy repose. Psalm xli, 3 ; Isa. xxv, 8 ; lvii, 1, 2. Thus, whilst the Saviour puts forth His hand by a gentle force, to disengage the fruit from all that would retain it here, He minglest with the act the blessed impartation of power and love, so as to fill the soul with conscious peace, and sometimes with exulting joy. So sustained, the spirit can bid a cheerful farewell to the mortal part, trusting it as a redeemed property to be lodged in the grave, as in a place of rest, until the voice of the Lord shall raise it again to never-ending beauty and life ; believing also that until that period of perfection to the whole man, the delivered soul shall be possessed of the vision of the Lord. These are mercies abundantly treasured up in Christ for the ripened saint, and so given forth in

the last hour that a final conformity to Jesus is exultingly known: conflicts being over and warfare done, the cry of the rejoicing soul as it passes into rest is like that of the living Head—"It is finished!" John xix, 30.

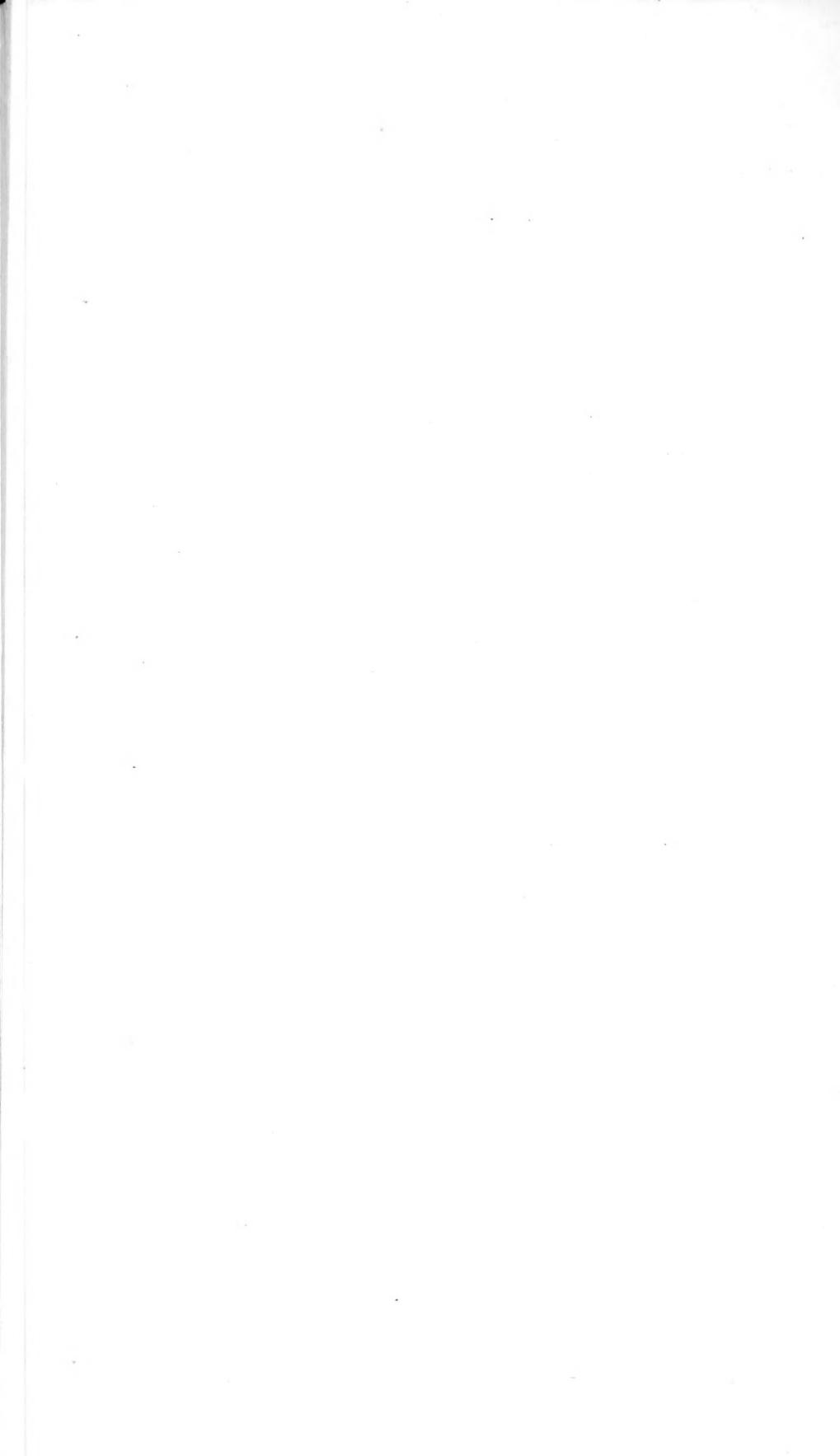
Thus death is stripped of its terrors, by being disarmed of its sting, and the Bible testimony is verified. The Lord the Saviour triumphs in His saints, and by Him they sing aloud, "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. xv, 55, 56, 57.

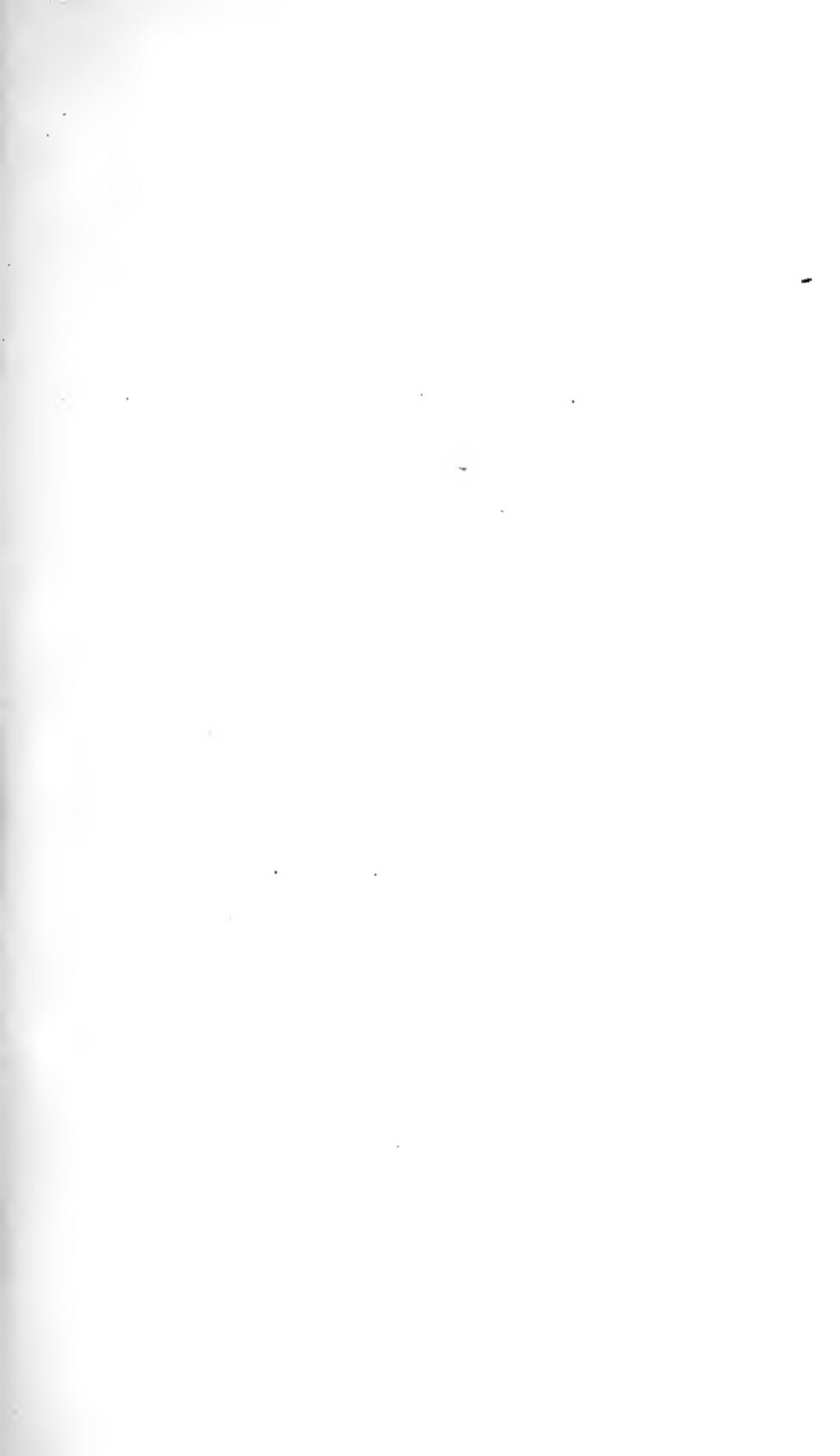
Let it be to us a subject of deepest import, a point of heartfelt interest. Let us press toward the mark, and patiently wait the Lord's coming, vigilantly guarding against whatever might depress our joy, and cherishing the disposition which can exclaim, Come, Lord Jesus!" Rev. xxii, 20.

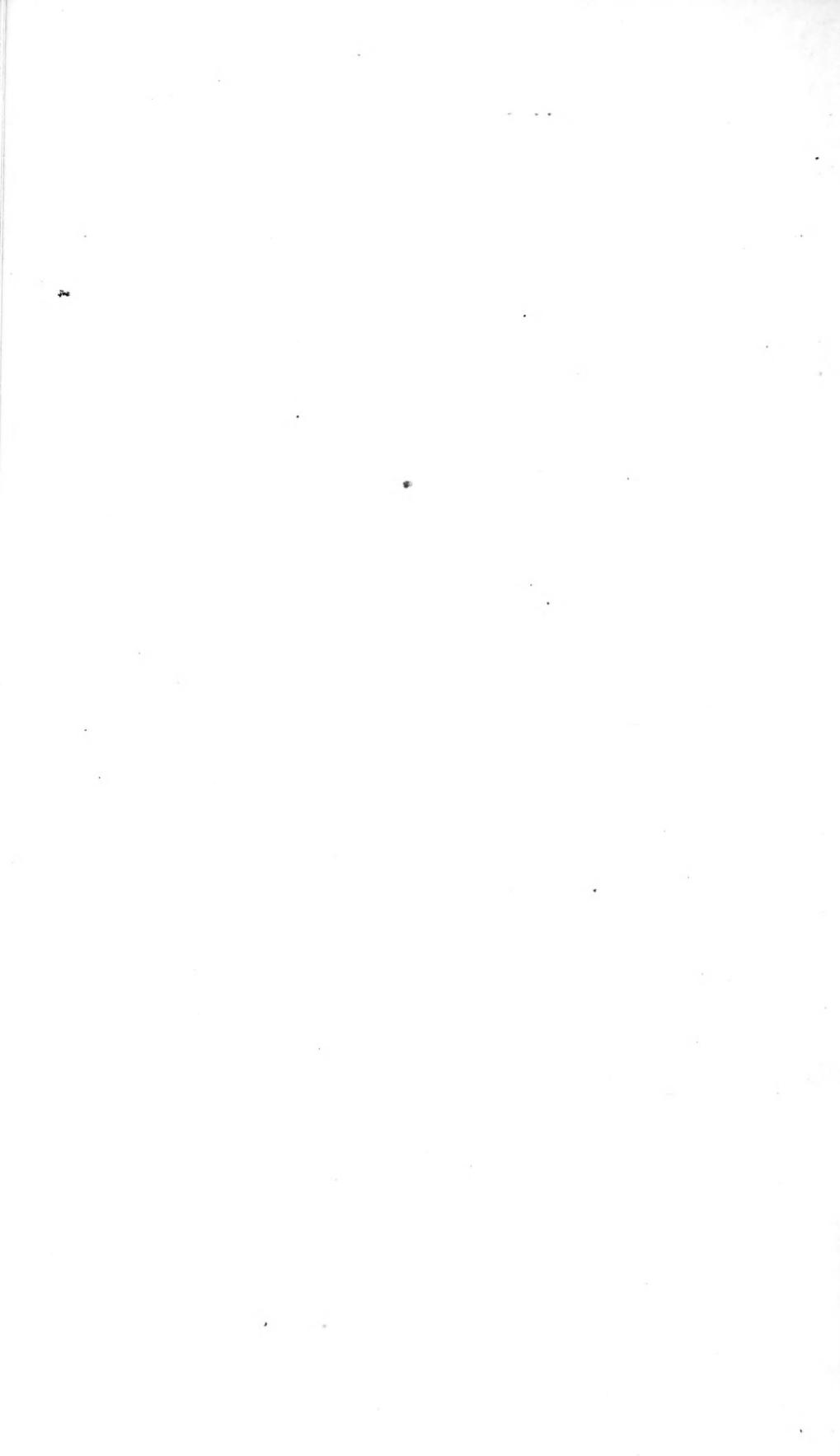
Let all who have not the evidence of meetness, or of an advanced state, be excited to reflection. Consider the solemn words which are spoken in rebuke of the barren, unfruitful, and unsound. Be afraid of the command to cut the barren tree from privileges and life; of the threatened judgment awaiting such as, under privileges, bring forth the briar and the thorn;

or of being numbered with those who are described by the Prophet as having a root which is rottenness, and whose blossom shall go up as dust. Rather let us seek the Saviour's effectual grace, and in His strength prepare to meet our God.

T H E E N D .









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